

FREE INSIDE

ACOUSTIC PRESENTS... PLAYLIST FEATURING WILLIE NELSON, RORY GALLAGHER, JACKSON BROWNE

ACOUSTIC

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JAMES BAY

IN THE STUDIO WITH THE UK'S HOTTEST NEW GUITAR PLAYER

“IT'S TIME FOR A GUITAR MUSIC REVOLUTION”



CALEXICO

JOEY BURNS ON THE
EDGE OF THE SUN

STRIKING MATCHES

THE NASHVILLE DUO'S
BLAZING NEW ALBUM

COUNTING CROWS

DAVE IMMERGLÜCK
SOMEWHERE UNDER
WONDERLAND

DAVID LINDLEY

EXPANDING THE
PARAMETERS OF
POPULAR MUSIC

ISSUE 103 APRIL 2015 UK £4.95



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A LITTLE WORD

The awards are mounting. The world's critics have been won over. The legions of fans are waiting. The album is just about to drop. The shows are sold out. James Bay is standing in the eye of a musical storm – and for someone at the epicentre of it all, he's remarkably chilled. He's unfazed by everything going on around him, and exudes a calm and collected confidence worn only by those who know they're truly great at what they do. And great he is. Everything music was lacking at the end of 2014, James Bay is putting back into place. Along with the help of fellow breakthrough guitar newcomer George Ezra, James is bringing the guitar back to the forefront of popular music.

I spent the afternoon with James in an East London recording studio, and it's clear that it isn't so much "if" James Bay is going to be the next big UK guitar man, but "when". With critics' approval pouring in following his Brits Critics' Choice award and making the BBC Sound of 2015 list, his ascent is all but guaranteed. So, want to know the secret to his success, sound, and what it's like being the most talked about guy in music? Head over to page 44 to find out.

Elsewhere in this issue, we feature Calexico's Joey Burns who talks about the band's new album *Edge Of The Sun*. "Eclectic" doesn't begin to fully explain the soundscapes Joey and John Convertino cook up. The new album takes them to Mexico City, and we've got the lowdown (pg. 38).

There are also interviews with Counting Crows' Dave Immerglück, Jackson Browne's long-time collaborator David Lindley, and the newest duo to blaze a trail out of Nashville: Striking Matches.

This issue sees the second edition of *Acoustic Presents... Playlist* hit your mat, too. Much like James Bay admits he is in his feature interview, I'm in awe of Willie Nelson, too – I mean, who isn't? It's a thrill to revisit one of his many (many!) albums, *Red Headed Stranger*.

Enjoy the issue – and be sure to pick up James' *Chaos And The Calm* on March 23.

Guy Little
Editor

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ACOUSTIC

Presents...

14 TRACKS
OF THE MONTH'S
BEST NEW
ACOUSTIC MUSIC

01

who are... chris while and julie matthews

**CHRIS WHILE & JULIE MATTHEWS****'I DON'T KNOW'**

Marking their 20th anniversary, Chris While and Julie Matthews released their ninth studio

album in November 2014. *Who We Are* finds While and Matthews in full creative flow and once again showcases their diversity as both musicians and songwriters. Chris While and Julie Matthews' musical partnership began in 1994 when they were key members of influential folk super-group The Albion Band. In 1997, they left the band to concentrate on their work as a duo. They are 10-time nominees at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards since 2001 and were best duo winners in 2009.

Website: www.whileandmatthews.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/whileandmatthews

Twitter: @whilematthews

05

ise

**BRUISE****'DREAMLAND'**

Bruise has carved a niche with their progressive take on alt-folk over the last 15 years, touring worldwide. Isobel Morris and Jim

Kimberley's catalogue of quality material only lacks the comfortable security of fitting into a genre, with no inevitable blues or soul template to follow – just an honest re-imagining of folk, a creative mission which at times is just barely folk. The Bruise repertoire has always absorbed its melodic sensibilities from the world of folk, and their arrangements and production values have always had their feet in the world of prog. Their collection of songs sees an evolution of the band's sound, and this acoustic sensibility feels like a homecoming.

Website: www.bruiseuk.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bruiseuk

Twitter: @bruiseuk

06

CHAE

**MICHAEL FIX****'SILVERTOP BLUES'**

This remarkable composer and musician has the power to create sensory experiences through his music – it captures and

conveys emotions, experiences and images with ease. Over the past 25 years, he's released 13 albums, together with several DVDs, songbooks, singles and EPs, and has established himself as one of Australia's finest guitarists and composers, performing regularly at festivals across Australia, Europe, Asia, and writing evocative music for television, film and documentaries. He's also won numerous awards for his music, including three Golden Guitars, and, as a Maton guitar endorsee (with his own signature model guitar), his guitar workshops are in high demand all over Australia and internationally.

Website: www.michaelifix.com

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**PAUL THOMPSON****'FLIGHTS OF GESE'**

To mark the release of *Lost In The Land Of Midnight Sun*, Paul Thompson is embarking on a musical journey from his

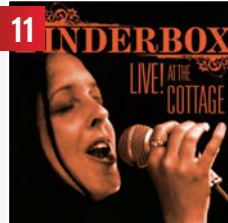
Norfolk home to the Outer Hebrides... in a milk float! Starting on June 5 at the Green Britain Centre, he will be travelling in the specially converted vehicle, with solar panels powering music gear. Performing at outdoor locations such as Wildlife Trust Centres and the Northumberland National Park, Paul will be running songwriting workshops, and there will be support slots available for up-and-coming singer-songwriters. The tour will finish at the end of August with a 12-day string of shows at the Edinburgh Fringe. Details can be found at Paul's website.

Website: www.paultsmusic.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/paultsmusic

Twitter: @paultsmusic

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**TINDERBOX****'CONSEQUENCE'**

Tinderbox is an award winning acoustic duo featuring Dublin born Monique Houraghan with a distinctive "honey-like"

vocal, and Dan Tucker with an intricate fingerstyle guitar technique. In addition to headline shows in the UK, Ireland and America, Tinderbox has played support for many high profile acts including Joan Armatrading, Graham Gouldman, Cara Dillon, Hazel O'Connor, Jon Allen, Eleanor McEvoy, Amy Wadge, Ben's Brother, Ralph McTell, Squeeze's Chris Difford, and Ade Edmondson. BBC 6 Music's Tom Robinson described the music as "gorgeous". Tim Carroll of *Folkwords* magazine described Tinderbox as "highly accomplished".

Website: www.tinderboxacoustic.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/tinderboxacoustic

Twitter: @tinderboxduo

02



THE FOLLY BROTHERS 'TIME IN THE CAN'

The Folly Brothers is a Leamington-based bluegrass trio consisting of brothers Mark Roden

(acoustic guitar) and Jonny Roden (banjo), and Wes Stanton (double bass). Going down a storm on the local festival circuit, and having amassed BBC Introducing success, the trio delves into a gritty and rootsy mélange full of sweeping licks, pumping bass lines and tasty harmonies. They successfully blend a modern country twang with rollicking bluegrass which has stirred up the UK roots circuit. Currently recording music to be released later in the year, keep your eye on their Facebook page for release info and details of upcoming shows.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thefollybrothers

Twitter: @follybrothers

03



FERNWOOD ARCADIA 'OWEN'S HIDEAWAY'

Formed in 2006 by Todd Montgomery and Gayle Ellett, Fernwood

has released three albums so far: *Almeria*, *Sangita* and *Arcadia*. They create contemporary acoustic music that is beautiful and elegant, with a strong cinematic and pan-cultural feel. By combining elements of pastoral acoustic music, with the sounds of Traditional American, Irish, Eastern European, Asian, and Middle Eastern music, and a laid-back Southern California vibe, the music of Fernwood is quite special. With a deliberate focus on composition, arrangements and orchestration, they have created a new Americana hybrid style that is uniquely their own.

Website: www.fernwoodmusicgroup.com

04



FANFARE CIOCARLIA 'THE ABSINTHE-MINDED GYPSY'

Fusing infectious, lightning-fast melodies, thunderous drums,

unbridled brass and a mischievous, captivating stage presence, Fanfare Ciocarlia are unparalleled live performers. Described by *The Times* as "a heavy, heavy monster of sound" and by *The Evening Standard* as "the best live band in the world", Fanfare Ciocarlia have taken their eerie Balkan groove into venues, festivals and dance clubs across the planet. Fanfare Ciocarlia's live blast appeals to punks and headbangers, jazz and funk fans, world music aficionados and those who simply love music that is unique.

Website: www.fanfareciocarlia.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/FanfareCiocarlia

Twitter: @FCiocarla

07



FABIAN HOLLAND 'SPRING'

Fabian Holland is a songwriter who gets right to the heart of the human condition in a disarmingly

subtle way. Less than 18 months after releasing his widely applauded self-titled debut CD, the canal boat-dwelling musician is back with *A Day Like Tomorrow*, an album of nine compelling original songs segueing seamlessly with strong interpretations of two traditional tracks and further showcasing his distinctive voice and guitar playing. Unusual teamwork features in this classy release with the introduction of edgy drums, percussion and vocals from the acclaimed Fred Claridge. *A Day Like Tomorrow* is out on April 27.

Website: www.fabianholland.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/fabianhollandmusic

Twitter: @fabianholland

08



NOAH FRANCIS JOHNSON 'FOR A LONG TIME'

Inspired by Bob Dylan, what strikes you is Noah Francis Johnson's ability to

characterise and express his personal feelings. Brought up to greats such as Marvin Gaye and Frank Sinatra, Noah is blessed with a versatile range, depth, richness and power. Similar to Gaye, Noah's diversity has given him the ability to sing ranging from rock, blues to soul. Noah's musical journey started alongside his father performing in working men's clubs in his home country of Wales, a place that has given birth to names such as Tom Jones, Stereophonics, and Manic Street Preachers. Noah's *Life And Times* is out now.

Website: www.noahfrancisjohnson.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NoahFrancisLT

Twitter: @noahfrancis

09



PAUL BRETT 'ICARUS'

Paul Brett is rated as one of the best 12-string acoustic guitarists in the world. He has played or recorded with the Strawbs, the

Overlanders, Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Elmer Gantry's Velvet Opera, the Velvet Opera, Tintern Abbey, Fire, Roy Harper, Al Stewart, Lonnie Donegan, Paul Brett Sage and in his own right as Paul Brett. He was a top session guitarist in the 1960s and 70s, having been in demand for many top sessions with a wide variety of artists. His first 12-string guitar suite 'Earth Birth' was critically acclaimed. It was released on Paul's own label Phoenix Future. This led to Paul being signed on a four-album deal to RCA Records.

Website: www.paulbrettguitarist.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Paulbrettsvintageguitars

YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/guitbrett

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CHRIS GRAY 'SHE LOVES THE MORNING'

Chris Gray has spent the past few years honing his brand of bluesy, melodic folk-rock, regularly

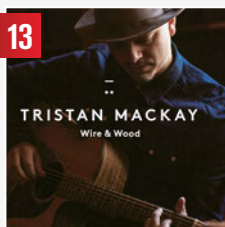
performing live as both a solo acoustic artist and with his band. He has opened for Roger Daltrey, Peter Green, the Coral, the Charlatans, John Power, Status Quo, Matt Cardle, Feeder, Turin Brakes, and headlined the Deep South Festival. In 2013, Chris was asked to record a cover of the Kinks classic song 'Waterloo Sunset' for the Peter Quail Foundation. While recording the track, he worked on creating a four-track EP (*Don't Lose Your Way*) with producer, Tony Lowe (Robert Fripp), who offered Chris a recording contract with Sunn Creative.

Website: www.sunncreative.com/latest/chris-gray

Facebook: www.facebook.com/chrisgraymusic

Twitter: @chrisgrayiom

13



TRISTAN MACKAY 'WIRE & WOOD'

With his new album *Wire & Wood* due out in April, Tristan Mackay is a hot prospect for 2015. Since

he was famously discovered busking by producer Martin Levan, this singer-songwriter has been amassing a passionate fanbase. Tristan's first studio album *Out Along The Wire* topped the iTunes Blues chart in 2012 and received acclaim from the music press. His follow-up album *Wire & Wood*, an all-acoustic record, is already receiving effusive praise and early airplay from Radio 2. Tristan has toured and guested extensively since his debut album as support for Beth Hart, Rumer, Billy Bragg, the Proclaimers, Steve Harley, and Eric Johnson.

Website: www.tristanmackay.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/tristanmackaymusic

Twitter: @tristanmackay

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INTI ROWLAND 'BEATEN, BATTERED, BUT BOLD'

Recorded in six days in a converted chapel in the Scottish highlands, *17th Century Japanese Aviary* is the first full-

length release from London-based singer-songwriter Inti Rowland. Rowland's fingerpicked guitar sits in the fore, but the album soars way beyond the foundations of traditional singer-songwriters, with brass, a string quartet and light percussion adding to the mix, which combine to give the album a John Martyn vibe. The church setting gives Rowland's soft vocals reverberation that gives way to a Benjamin Francis Leftwich-style track. The intimate yet full-bodied experimentation is on par with other modern folk greats such as Laura Marling and Ben Howard.

Website: www.intirowland.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/intirowland

Twitter: @intirowland

44 JAMES BAY

Breakthrough guitar guy James Bay has been anointed with praise from the UK's music press as they congregated to decide who'd be awarded the coveted critics' choice at the annual Brit Awards. They chose James Bay, not just suggesting big things for the Hitchin troubadour, but pretty much guaranteeing it. We spend an afternoon in the studio with the hottest new guitar player in town.



38 CALEXICO

Steve Bennett sits down with Joey Burns of alt-folk band Calexico to talk about their latest album *Edge Of The Sun*.



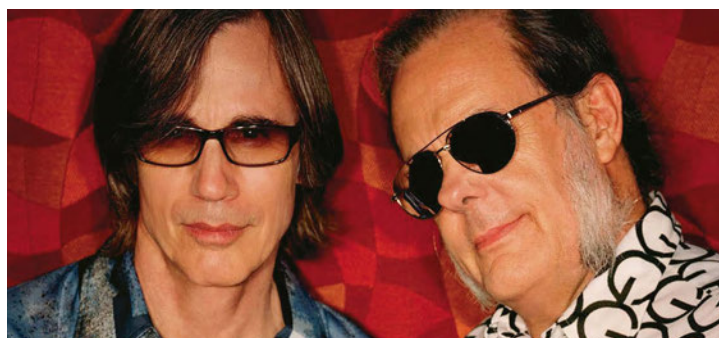
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Nashville country duo Striking Matches talk working with T-Bone Burnett, new album *Nothing But The Silence*, and Takamine guitars.



28 DAVE IMMERGLÜCK

At age 53, Immerglück is a bona fide veteran of the studio and road. Although the Crows enjoyed their biggest commercial success during the 90s via their colossal debut *August and Everything After* (1993), they continue to make music and tour tirelessly.



24 DAVID LINDLEY

The go-to session master talks to *Acoustic* about his playing on some of the world's greatest albums, his enviable guitar collection, and taking calls from Eric Clapton.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Improve your playing with our techniques section...

With 12 pages of different level-specific techniques, whether you're a novice or an expert our columns have something for everyone.

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Alun Lower finds a lot of love this new breed of laid back, all-purpose affordable acoustic.

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David Meads tests the latest Sitka spruce meets rosewood round-shoulder dreadnought from Gibson: the J-29.

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Think all gig bags are created equal? Alun Lower finds out whether Gator Cases are the second coming or simply extra padding...

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We talk to rousing Scottish singer-songwriter Mo Evans who's making waves with his new EP *Spilled My Love*

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This month, it's time for part two of Gordon Giltrap's visit to the workshop of classical guitar luthier Gary Southwell who builds custom orders for people such as Julian Bream and Paul Simon.

90 10 ALTERNATIVE UKE PLAYERS TO DRAW NEW-FOUND INSPIRATION FROM

We look at 10 of the best alternative ukulele players out there. Hailed as the great democratiser of music, when you mention the instrument virtually the only names people will mention are George Formby and Tiny Tim. So, now those names, which do not make this list, are out of the way, we can concentrate on 10 very varied ukulele players.



NEWSDESK

ACOUSTIC BRINGS YOU ALL OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC.



ED SHEERAN SET FOR SECOND SIGNATURE MARTIN GUITAR

C.F. Martin & Co. has announced the X Signature Edition to retail at £579

C.F. Martin & Co. and multi-platinum singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran are teaming up for the second time to create another Signature Artist Edition guitar from the Martin Custom Shop: the Ed Sheeran X Signature Edition.

In 2013, Martin Guitar and Sheeran unveiled their first collaboration, the LX1E Ed Sheeran Signature Edition, which sold out everywhere. For the X Signature Edition, Sheeran is once again donating 100 per cent of his royalties from the sales of each guitar to East Anglia's Children's Hospices.

'It was a huge privilege working with the Martin team to create another Signature Edition guitar,' says Sheeran. 'I've had the chance to bring the new model on the road with me already, and I'm so excited that all of

my fans will be able to purchase one of their own, with all the proceeds going to EACH, a charity very close to my heart.'

Designed in collaboration with the Grammy-nominated artist and brand ambassador, the Ed Sheeran X Signature Edition features his signature "x" sign on the headstock and down the fretboard. The six times platinum-selling album's logo is inlaid in solid koa on a solid spruce wood top. The model comes stage-ready, equipped with Fishman Isys T electronics, SP Lifespan Martin strings and a padded gig bag.

The Ed Sheeran X Signature Edition guitar is available for pre-order now. It retails at £579. To find your local Martin dealer, visit the Westside Distribution website.

www.westsidedistribution.com

"The warmth and depth of Elixir Strings Phosphor Bronze is really important to my overall sound. They feel great and their tone lasts an incredibly long time."

- Eric Bibb



www.elixirstrings.co.uk/products



MANUEL RODRIGUEZ GUITARS UNVEIL FLAMENCO MODERNA SERIES

New range of electro-acoustic with a modern take on a classic

Manuel Rodríguez Guitars has announced the introduction of the acoustic-electric Flamenco Moderna Series. This range is the culmination of over 100 years of traditional Spanish guitar design and construction, and these versatile flamenco guitars combine a sleek, low-profile neck and thinner body with premium Fishman electronics. These refined features make Flamenco Moderna guitars an ideal choice for steel string and electric players seeking to expand their tonal range with the



BRIAN MAY DOUBLE CUTAWAY UKULELE ANNOUNCED

Designed by May himself, the "red special" ukulele will retail at £225

Designed by Brian May in conjunction with House Music, BMG has announced a special concert model ukulele to the BMG stable.

Sporting the double cutaway Red Special body shape, the Brian May Uke with sapele back and sides and spruce top is finished in Antique Cherry, making it a perfect partner for the award-winning Brian May

Special, as well as a travel-ready instrument in its own right.

With an under-saddle, piezo pickup and fully featured Fishman KULA on-board preamp, the BMG Uke is equally at home on a big stage or in an intimate, acoustic environment. The uke will retail for £225.

For more information, visit: www.brianmayguitars.co.uk

warmth and softness of nylon strings.

With two models distinguished by the careful selection of their unique wood combinations, Flamenco Moderna guitars feature a thin profile and single cutaway to provide easy access to all 19 silver-plated frets on a fingerboard of Indian rosewood. The onboard Fishman Clásica III electronics package is optimised for nylon string tonality and features an easy-to-read chromatic tuner.

The FLMOD500 features walnut back

and sides with solid Canadian red cedar top, producing a warm, round tone.

For players who prefer more snap and brightness, FLMOD550 combines solid select spruce top with back and sides of flame maple. Both guitars feature a gloss finish and antique gold-plated machine heads on a Rosewood overlay headstock. The guitars are strung with premium D'Addario® ProArte EJ45 strings.

For more information, visit: www.rodriguezguitarsus.com

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20 BEST BITS OF NEW GEAR FROM NAMM 2015

JHS AND PAUL BRETT GEMINI COLLABORATION

Now celebrating their 50th anniversary year, John Hornby Skewes, has announced two new models from the ever-popular Paul Brett range of acoustics from their brand Vintage Guitars. The first new addition is the Gemini Baritone VGE800N combining Paul's many years of experience for superb build quality and impressive specifications.

Featuring a solid spruce top with solid mahogany back and sides, the Gemini's mahogany neck is matched to a sonokeling rosewood fingerboard and bridge. The VGE800N comes in an authentic antique finish with ivory-effect rosette and binding with a unique white scratchplate. A Fishman Matrix pickup system takes



this guitar to the stage along with a padded gig bag.

'The Gemini really is two guitars in one,' says Paul Brett. 'With heavier gauge strings, you can tune it in A-A or B-B for some truly sonorous baritone sounds. Alternatively, you can string it with normal gauge strings and use it in standard tuning.'

The second addition to the Paul Brett range is the Viaten Tenor VTE800N. Based upon the original Paul Brett parlour-sized guitar, the Viaten features a solid spruce top with sapele back and sides, and comes with a padded gig bag. 'The Viaten will play in many tunings and pitches. It's ideal for both picking and strumming styles – aside from that, it's a lot of fun to play' says Paul.

www.jhs.co.uk

MARTIN'S ICONIC D-35 TURNS 50

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the D-35 Dreadnought (1965-2015), Martin has announced the D-35 Brazilian 50th anniversary limited edition. Constructed with Madagascar rosewood sides and back wings, a Brazilian rosewood back centre wedge and headplate, an FSC certified European spruce top with 1/4" non-scalloped bracing, and ivoroid binding throughout, this enhanced D-35 is a fitting tribute to one of Martin's most popular and inspired models. Limited to 100 pieces, each D-35 Brazilian bears an interior label signed by Chris Martin IV, and a 50th anniversary booklet.

martinguitar.com



YAMAHA'S LIMITED EDITION HANDCRAFTED A SERIES

Yamaha has introduced two higher-end additions to its well-received A Series guitar range: the A6R dreadnought body shape and the AC6R concert shape. Constructed of all-solid Sitka spruce tops and solid rosewood backs and sides, both models are handcrafted at Yamaha's Music Craft workshop in Hamamatsu, Japan. The A6 features nitrocellulose lacquer finishes, golden open-gear tuners, mother-of-pearl inlaid rosette and headstock logo, along with an ebony bridge and fretboard. They come equipped with the SRT System.

www.yamaha.com

LR BAGGS ACOUSTIC SESSION DI

LR Baggs has announced that it is to release the latest DI box: Acoustic Session. Inspired by the LR Baggs Handcrafted Video Sessions and their experience in some of Nashville's great studios, Session Acoustic DI brings a new signature studio sound to your live rig. The Session DI enhances your acoustic pickup and imparts the rich sonic character that you'd expect from an experienced audio engineer using some of the world's finest studio gear. LR Baggs has captured that studio magic and put it into a compact, easy-to-use DI that will transform your live sound.

www.lrbaggs.com

DEERING BANJOS CELEBRATE 40TH ANNIVERSARY

The Deering Banjo Company celebrated their 40th anniversary at the 2015 NAMM Show. Established in 1975 by Greg and Janet Deering in San Diego, Deering has the broadest line of banjos of any manufacturer in the world, and are the number one US manufacturer. Eagle Music is the official Deering representative and distributor of Deering products in the UK. Deering's Goodtime range of affordable banjos launched the Americana open back banjo and announced the addition of a banjo ukulele to the range. The new American-made concert-scale banjo uke instrument features an 11-inch violin maple rim, maple neck, and a floating bridge and bridge plate. It also makes use of the company's "quiet metal" technology for the tailpiece and coordinator rod.

www.deeringbanjos.com

A LITTLE DREADNOUGHT FROM THE BIG GUYS

C.F. Martin & Co. also announced the Dreadnought Junior. It's not often that they come up with a new body size, but the new Dreadnought Junior has been fashioned for player comfort, a clear and powerful tone, and easy action. Built in Mexico with all-solid woods, the affordably priced Dreadnought Junior is ideal for smaller players, students, travelers, or anyone who aspires to the clarity and depth of tone that has defined Martin

instruments for more than 180 years. The C.F. Martin & Co. Dreadnought Junior retails for £599.

www.martinguitar.com



WASHBURN ANNOUNCES ELECTRO ROVER TRAVEL GUITAR

Washburn Guitars has announced a new addition to its Rover line of acoustic travel guitars: the RO10E with built in microphone pickup. The microphone is placed inside the body just under the bridge and is accessed via an endpin jack. The Rover has a solid spruce top and it features a full size 24" scale. It also comes complete with a soft shell case that includes a shoulder strap, instructional CD ROM, guitar strap and three plectrums. The Washburn Rover RO10E is expected to be available in March for £189.

www.washburn.com



THE £100K MARTIN OM-45 DE LUXE AUTHENTIC 1930

Martin is producing a limited run of the highly sought after Martin OM-45 De Luxe. A hand-crafted replica of the original model, these OM-45 De Luxe Authentic 1930 acoustic guitars feature Brazilian rosewood back and sides topped with VTS Adirondack spruce, delivering unrivaled tone. These guitars were treated with

Martin's Vintage Tone System in order to replicate the aged appearance and tonality of the 1930 originals. These guitars also sport authentic 1930 barrel and heel necks, Style 45 "snowflake" inlays, and Waverly engraved gold banjo tuners with solid MOP buttons.

www.martinguitar.com



FENDER'S TIM ARMSTRONG HELLCAT AND NEW CONCERT TONE BANJOS

The limited-edition Tim Armstrong Hellcat White Satin is an elegant take on the beat-up Sixties Fender acoustic on which he's written so many classic West Coast punk songs for Rancid.

This concert-style guitar has all the elements of the original, but in a stately White Satin finish. Ideal for pop, rock, folk and more, it has a solid mahogany top for an especially sweet sound, a satin-finish maple neck for smooth playability, onboard Fishman electronics for outstanding amplified performance, and more.

Fender also announced the Concert Tone Banjo Series. They present modern interpretations of the classic Fender Concert Tone banjos of the 1960s. Just like the popular instruments of that decade, today's Concert Tone banjos are finely crafted for rich sound, smooth playing feel and elegant looks. The Premium Concert Tone 59 Banjo tops the line with stylish pro-level features including a beautiful five-piece walnut/maple neck, brass tone ring, American black burl walnut resonator with a high-gloss natural finish, multicolored wood marquetry on the neck and resonator, vintage-style "nouveau acrylic" white pearl and blue green abalone headstock inlay, and a special "Concert Tone" block inlay at the 18th fret.

www.fender.com



TAYLOR MADE: THE NEW 600 SERIES

For 2015, Taylor has applied their forward-thinking vision to its maple 600 Series, connecting maple's rich musical history with its stable environmental outlook as an important tonewood of the future.

The 600 Series has been a vital part of Taylor's instrument offering for many years now. Despite its heritage and longevity, the 2015 600 Series offers a new approach to building a maple flat top guitar. For years, musicians have viewed maple guitars as merely a good stage instrument, or an overly bright sounding guitar used to cut through a loud mix. This new approach with the maple 600 Series reflects Andy Powers' desire to build an instrument from this tonewood that is first and foremost, a fine musical voice. There are some architectural elements inspired by the rosewood and spruce 800 Series guitars, but much of the maple 600 Series guitars reflect a fresh approach on how to build a flat top guitar using a maple.

'People ask me what my mandate was for the new 600 Series,' Andy Powers says, 'and the truth is, it was simple: use more maple.'

'One of the most notable things with the new maple 600 series is that the back

braces don't extend to the edge of the guitar. That's a critical thing, because in that way, the back of the maple guitar can move more like a violin, or more like an archtop guitar. You're not going to hear the same bright maple qualities that a lot of us associate with maple flat top guitars. We don't want the big boomy sound of a jumbo; we've sought a richer, warmer sound with a more complex voice acoustically and on stage.'

The redesign refers to tone enhancing design tweaks that Taylor has implemented; the ideas being that the traditionally bright tones of the 600s are underpinned with a warmer, softer note. On first play, it appears to be mission accomplished. The changes are subtle but the richer tones give the guitar a more complete feel. As the name would suggest, the body is maple, although it has a Sitka spruce top that undergoes a process called torrefaction – a roasting process that produces an aged tonal character marked by greater acoustic resonance and responsiveness. Torrefaction also gives the top wood a slightly darker appearance, much like that of cedar, complete with the customised bracing developed by Andy Powers, as well as different wood thicknesses for each model in the series. Then there is the 3.5mm gloss finish, boosting the maple's volume. The obvious aesthetic refinement here is the colour of the maple back and sides. This is a hand-rubbed brown sugar colour treatment that gives the maple a darker colour and a rich figure with vintage appeal. This special colour treatment on the back and sides adds no thickness to the top's finish.

The guitars are finished with the Taylor headstock and nickel tuners, and also feature Elixir Phosphor Bronze strings, while custom gauge Elixir HD Lights will be on the Grand Concert and Grand Auditorium models. The four models – the 614ce (£2,922), 616ce (£2,922), 656ce (£3,023), and 618ce (£2,721) – all feature the Taylor Expression System 2 pickup. 'From here on out, our goal is to build the greatest guitar we can,' says Bob Taylor.

www.taylorguitars.com

WASHBURN PRESENTS ITS NEW WOODCRAFT SERIES

Washburn Guitars' new Woodcraft series of instruments include the exotic back and sides woods of zebrawood, spalted maple, and koa with matching headstocks, bridges and pickguards, plus a maple fretboard on select models. The new series consists of 12 models available as dreadnought or dreadnought cutaway with electronics.

For more information: www.acousticmagazine.com

MARTIN'S VINTAGE TONE SYSTEM

Along with a raft of new instruments at the 2015 NAMM Show, C.F. Martin & Co. has announced that it is to roll out its Vintage Tone System, aka VTS. The new Martin Vintage Tone System (VTS) uses a unique recipe that is based on the historic torrefaction system. The VTS acts much like a time machine in which Martin can target certain time periods and age the top/braces to that era. This focused method allows Martin's craftsmen and women to recreate not only the pleasing visual aesthetics of a vintage guitar, but also reproduce the special tones previously reserved for vintage instruments.

Martin Guitar's Research and Development team rediscovered a process used by their craftsmen in the early 1900s to final dress the lacquer on their instruments by hand. The end result is a warm glow appearance that is as enticing to the eye as to touch. The Vintage Gloss finish leaves the guitar with a satin appearance, far from the appearance of a satin spray.

www.martinguitar.com

D'ANGELICO'S FIRST ACOUSTIC GUITAR LINE REVEALED

New York City-based D'Angelico Guitars announced their first-ever acoustic line at the 2015 NAMM Show. The beautiful new line covers a wide range of shapes and sizes – all featuring the iconic D'Angelico headstock. With the Fishman INK-4 onboard preamp and pickup system, bone nut and saddle, premium tonewood options and more, D'Angelico hasn't held back on high-level features.

D'Angelico's acoustic line consists of the following eight models: EX-63, Gramercy Grand Auditorium, Mercer Grand Auditorium, Lexington, Madison Jumbo, Brooklyn, Bowery and Mott Bass. Most of the D'Angelico acoustic models will feature gold Grover Imperial Tune-o-Matic tuners and the Fishman INK-4 onboard preamp and pickup, complete with a built-in tuner.

The acoustic models also feature FU-Tone brass bridge pins and D'Addario EXP-16 strings. The models will be available in natural, vintage sunburst, cherry sunburst, black and grey black finishes.

'The D'Angelico family continues to grow in 2015 with the introduction of



our brand-new acoustic line, and we are proud of the acoustic instruments we have created,' said Brenden Cohen, CEO of D'Angelico Guitars. 'These guitars cover a wide range of shapes and sizes, including mini, grand auditorium, dreadnought, jumbo, and even an acoustic bass. Using only premium tonewoods, each expertly crafted model offers a unique voice, catering to a wide variety of players.'

www.dangelicoguitars.com

KALA'S ELITE UKULELES

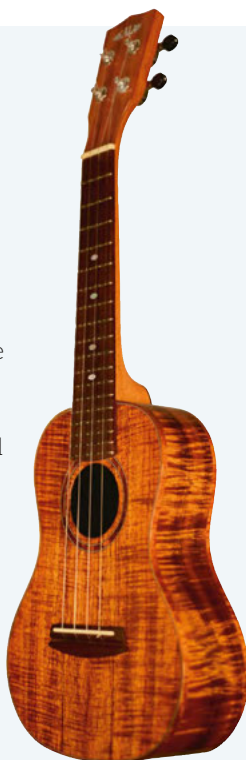
Kala's Elite US-made ukulele line is the company's first range of ukuleles completely handmade in Kala's custom shop in California, USA.

'People are asking for a US-made step-up ukulele and there aren't a lot of them available,' says Michael Upton, Kala president. 'We see a real opportunity for expanding the Kala high-end offerings. The look, sound, and intonation are a cut above anything else we've ever done.'

The Elite line consists of three series of instruments, all available in soprano, concert, and tenor sizes for a total of nine models. The ukuleles include all solid Hawaiian koa, Honduras mahogany neck, ebony and rosewood fingerboards and bridges, bone nut and saddle, custom inlays and appointments, engineered intonation for precise tuning and hand-tuned tops and bracing for optimal tone and volume. The fingerboard spacing of 1 ½ inches is wider than most ukuleles, which increases the string spacing to give the fingers more room.

Established in 2005, Kala Brand Music Co. celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2015. Kala offers over 200 models of ukulele, the Kala U-BASS, Kala Guitars, and an extensive line of accessories.

www.kalabrand.com



MICHAEL KELLY GUITARS GET A CUSTOM SHOP REDESIGN

Michael Kelly has introduced its Triad acoustic line. The Triad series is Michael Kelly's top of the range collection. Consistent between all four of the new models are the exotic wood three-piece backs, a solid spruce top, flamed okoume sides, zero endpin bridge, Triad three circle inlay elements, and built-in Fishman active electronics. The Triad CE is a classic cutaway body style that features an asymmetric soundhole rosette and natural satin finish for a more boutique feel, while the dreadnought body is finished in natural gloss.

www.michaelkellyguitars.com



IBANEZ ADDS MINI-DREADNOUGHT TENOR GUITAR

With the AVT2ENT, Ibanez introduces an acoustic-electric tenor guitar to the Artwood Vintage family of instruments. This mini-dreadnought tenor features a solid Sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides, and bone nut and saddle. A Fishman Sonicore pickup with an AEQ-SP2 preamp provides a well-balanced sound while the tenor also features a mahogany neck, rosewood bridge and fretboard, black and white ABS rosette, built-in tuner, and a high gloss natural finish. www.ibanez.com

BREEDLOVE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

In the late 80s, Larry Breedlove and Steve Henderson had a dream to build instruments unlike any others and started Breedlove in Tumalo in 1990. They set out to craft lightweight, responsive, and impeccably crafted guitars featuring innovative designs, unique materials, and distinctive aesthetics. Joined by Kim Breedlove in 1994, they began adding intricate inlays. In early prototyping they created the Breedlove sound that still serves as our benchmark today.

'All of our instruments are painstakingly designed in Bend, Oregon, utilising exclusive design elements like contemporary body shapes, handcrafted necks, the Breedlove bridge truss system, exotic tonewoods and stunning inlays to deliver a look and sound that is completely

unique to the Breedlove brand. Play one and you'll instantly get it: From an entry level Discovery to a Kim Breedlove Signature Masterclass, the distinctively crafted sound of a Breedlove will bring your art to new heights. This high-end craftsmanship is evident in the four models that Breedlove is introducing to celebrate 25 years,' the company says.

The four models released to celebrate the 25-year anniversary include: the Kim Breedlove Signature 25th, the Brazilian Concert 25th, the Oregon Concert 25th, and the Pursuit Concert 25th.

The first Breedlove ever built inspired the Kim Breedlove Signature 25th. With a sunken redwood cedar top and figured walnut back and sides, this guitar features the full Kim Breedlove commemorative inlay made of silver, mother of pearl, black

pearl, gold pearl and abalone.

'This design was created to represent an abbreviated take on the company history. Simply, from the top, the creative seed is planted and begins to sprout into a spiral of growth and directions (guitars, mandolins, electrics, ukuleles) and the challenges faced with that growth are gathered together, re-focused and re-branded leading to the company's 25th year. At the bottom, the seed is re-planted creating a new beginning,' says Kim Breedlove. This model will be a series of 10.

breedlovemusic.com



WATERLOO GUITARS CHANNEL DEPRESSION-ERA INSTRUMENTS

The Waterloo guitar line is a look back in time to when there was a genuine need for soulful tone that could be coaxed from simple instruments. The blues, country, and folk music played on these instruments was made in heartfelt response to the hard times of the depression era. These musical styles became the roots of popular American music for decades to come. The Waterloo brand is all about capturing the voice and spirit of the very best depression era guitars in well-made and playable instruments. The WL-14 is the flagship model of the Waterloo guitar line and the inspiration that started it all. Keeping true to the design and style of the era, the WL-14 is available in ladder bracing as well as X bracing. The ladder bracing option provides woody and open tone, with midrange honk that's perfect for fingerstyle blues. The "X" braced version retains tighter

focus and balance across the tonal range. There are currently two different neck options available for the WL-14. Choose from either a T-bar for ultra lightweight neck support or an adjustable truss rod. Hardshell Case by TKL included.

waterlooguitars.com



ASHDOWN LAUNCH WOODSMAN

Designed for the new wave of acoustic performers, Ashdown announced the Woodsman amplifiers, combining traditional, beautiful wooden-cabinets with powerful modern features for live performance and recording.

'Ashdown has had a long tradition of creating great amplifiers for acoustic performers,' says Ashdown's Mark Gooday. 'With this latest range we've designed amps that deliver superb sound for a new generation of acoustic guitarists and deliver the features they need at a new level of affordability.'

Woodsman amps are ideal for duos, or solo singer/guitar players, delivering pure, clear, acoustic tone and essential performance tuning features, including phase reverse and feedback eliminating notch filters. Three compact models are available: 25W Parlour, 40W Classic and 65W Jumbo. Each model features a custom-designed 8" Celestion driver. The Classic and Parlour model also feature a horn for increased full-range sound. All models include an auxiliary port.

www.ashdownmusic.com

NEW STRINGS FROM MARTIN AND LAURENCE JUBER

C. F. Martin & Co. announced their newly revamped Martin Strings line at the 2015 Winter NAMM Show. The improvements to Martin's string products will boast new stay-fresh packaging and eye-catching design for all eight major acoustic string product lines. The company is also announcing a new in-house proprietary treatment for their SP Lifespan Acoustic Strings that delivers the longest possible string life without sacrificing tone or natural feel.

All acoustic string packages have been redesigned to showcase a more elegant design, featuring a unique colour for each product family, such as SP Lifespan Strings in red and SP Strings in blue. Each package will also feature colour-coded corners for quick gauge identification. In addition, Martin will be packaging the strings in individual envelopes inside flow wrap pouches to keep the strings fresh longer. Martin has engineered a new proprietary treatment process for the Lifespan family to improve the consistency and compatibility of the treatment with their string wire.

Joining the Martin Strings family is an addition to the Retro product line called "LJ's Choice." The set has been named for Laurence Juber, a two-time Grammy award winner and Martin signature artist, and will feature a custom medium light gauge developed with the artist.

www.martinguitar.com/strings

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WIN! A FRESHMAN 12-STRING WORTH £400

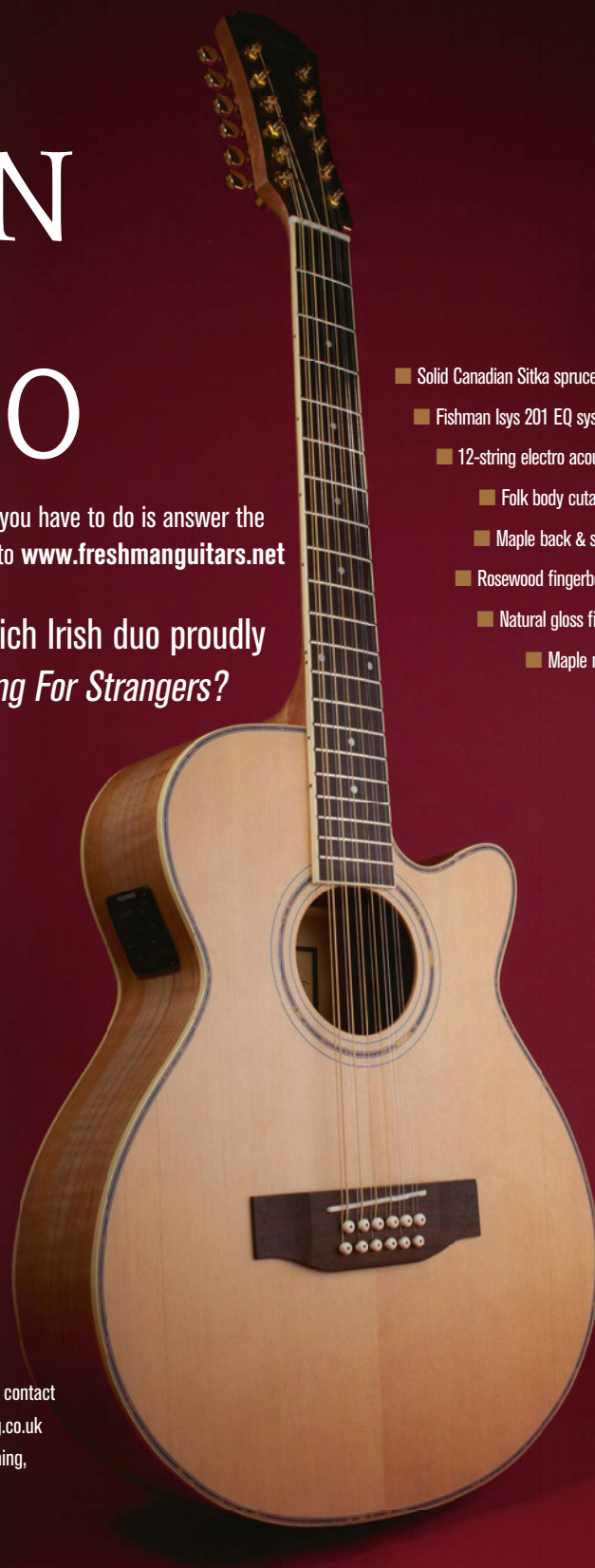
If you want to win the Freshman FA1AM12, courtesy of Freshman Guitars, all you have to do is answer the following question correctly! Couldn't be easier. If you need a hint, head over to www.freshmanguitars.net

Freshman Guitars has many notable endorsees, but which Irish duo proudly play Freshman instruments on their debut album *Singing For Strangers*?

- A) HUDSON TAYLOR
- B) TED & DOUGAL
- C) JEDWARD

"The FA1's tone is exceptional. It's incredibly warm and rich – surprising, in view of the body size. Even when I drop tuned the entire guitar to D the warmth remained, with no shortage of nicely proportioned bass response as an additional bonus. Another surprise is that it's relatively easy both to fingerpick and use a plectrum to bring out individual note patterns within chords. It might sound like an obvious attribute for any self-respecting 12-string, but I've found it to be quite rare to find an all-rounder in this respect," says David Mead of the FA1AM12.

- Solid Canadian Sitka spruce top
- Fishman Isys 201 EQ system
- 12-string electro acoustic
- Folk body cutaway
- Maple back & sides
- Rosewood fingerboard
- Natural gloss finish
- Maple neck



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Closing date for the Freshman competition is 09 April 2015. Winners will be announced 13 April 2015.

*Required details to enter the competition

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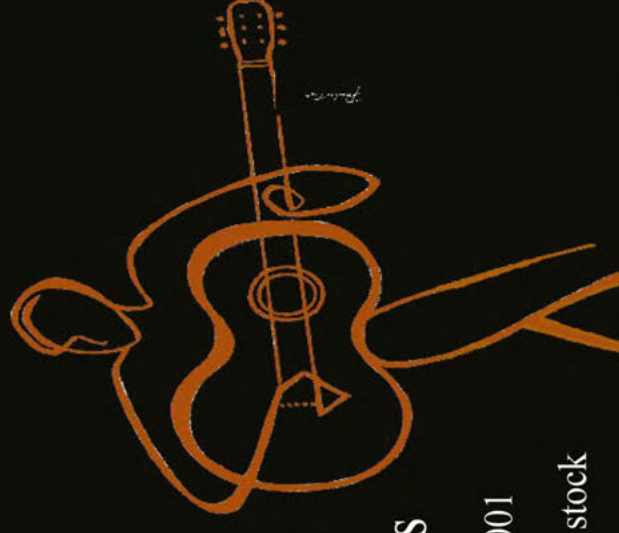
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*Competition entries must arrive no later than the closing date specified. The winner will be announced on 13 April 2015. Only the winner will be contacted. One entry per household. Image(s) of winner may be used for future editorial or advertising purposes. The winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries. No cash alternative is offered. Acoustic magazine reserves the right to substitute the prize for an alternative of equal or greater value.



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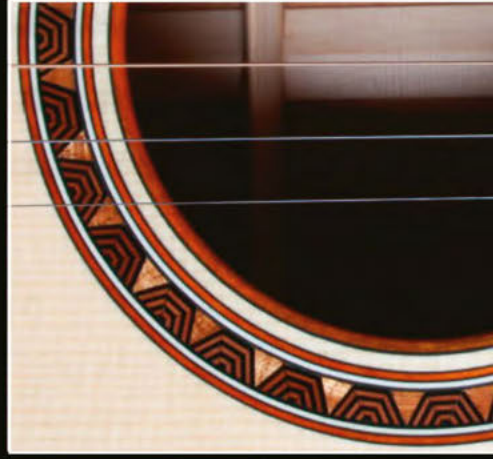
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ASK THE EXPERTS

Musicians' Union



ASK THE EXPERTS: PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Partnership agreements are essential when you're working with other musicians with a view to profit.

Am I in a partnership?

The Partnership Act 1890 defines a partnership as two or more individuals "carrying on a business in common with a view of profit". If you are sharing income and debts, then the broad view is that you are in a partnership. It matters because the law wasn't written with bands in mind. So where there is no written agreement (and sometimes even where there is), the Partnership Act could still affect you.

What do partnership agreements cover?

Partnership agreements should set out the partnership activities, such as who owns any rights created in the process (in songs, recordings, videos, etc.), who owns the band name, who owns the website, what are the financial arrangements (are all partners' shares equal?), what happens when a member leaves, and what are individual or group assets, like the PA, instruments, van and so on. They should also set out how key decisions, like the appointment of a manager, are to be made. Are those decisions unanimous or by majority? They can also be used in creative ways to reflect your group wishes. For example, your group may decide to share publishing income in a different ratio to the copyright ownership for certain songs, or for the duration of the group.

Why do you need one?

It makes financial and artistic sense – it could affect your income, and your control over your own destiny. The Partnership Act means that any member of the band has the authority to bind the rest of his or her partners and to incur debts in the name of the partnership. So having a partnership agreement could protect you from some almighty costs. You may find your own instrument and any equipment becomes a band asset when you join, and not yours to take away if you leave. A partnership agreement can protect your instrument and gear. Any band name will be treated as one of the assets of the partnership and, unless there is an agreement to the contrary, it is owned by all of the members of the partnership equally – so you may not be able to keep on using it without permissions.

Any income earned by members of the band from musical activities outside the band may be treated as band income under The Partnership Act and be liable to be shared accordingly. You can prevent that with a partnership agreement, and keep the money you earn as an individual.

Ultimately, not having a partnership agreement could open you up to potentially massive financial, logistic and artistic issues that you may not be able to resolve to your satisfaction without expensive litigation.

Don't Panic!

You can talk to us. Our partnership advisory service can help make sure you get a fair deal. We can even draft a partnership agreement for you, free-of-charge, if all members of the partnership belong to the MU or join. For details, contact your regional office. www.musiciansunion.org.uk

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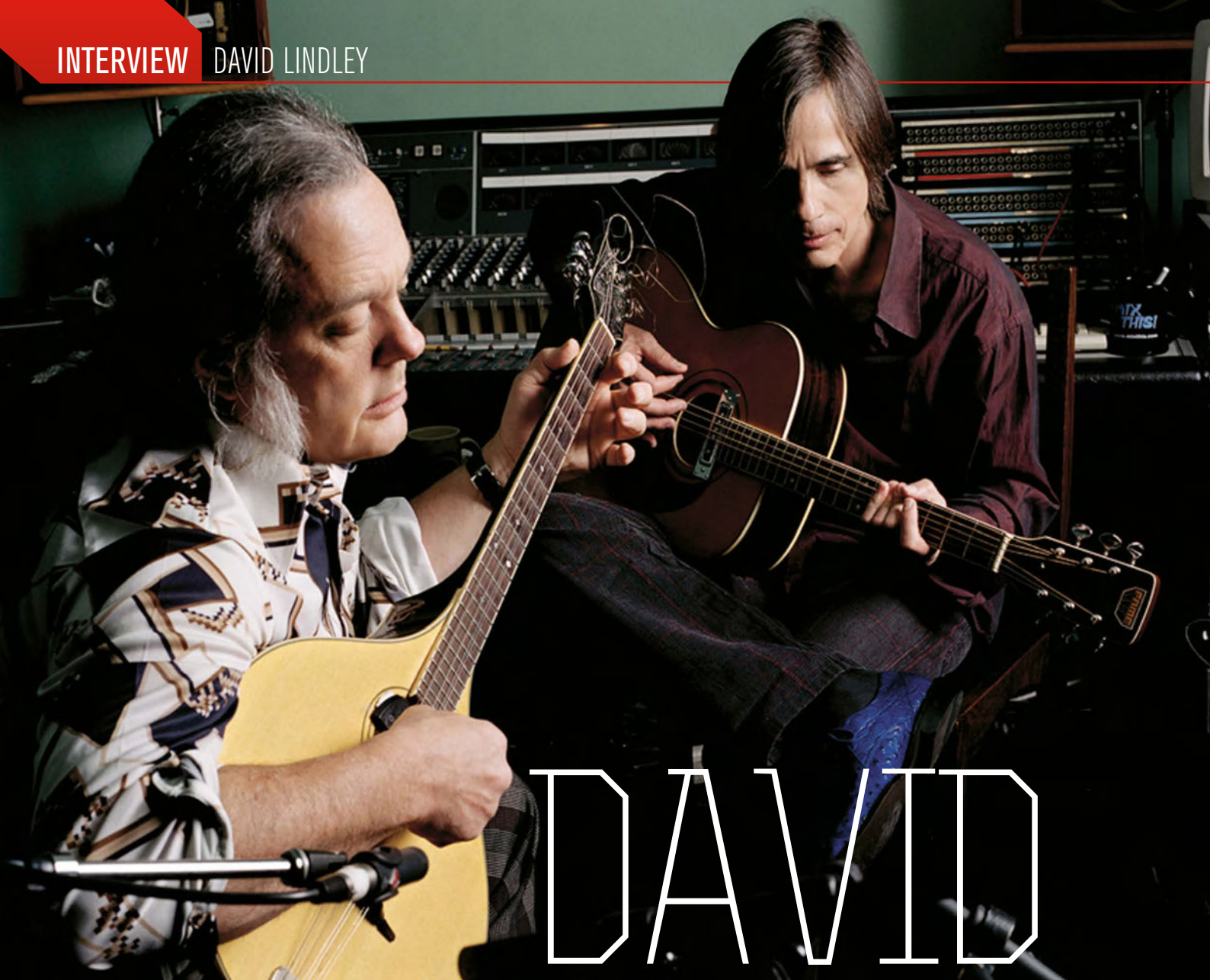
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DAVID

LINDLEY

The go-to session master talks to **Acoustic** about his playing on some of the world's greatest albums, his enviable guitar collection, and taking calls from Eric Clapton.

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES

Over the past five decades, David Lindley has become one of the most prominent and in-demand instrumentalists on the planet. He has studied, investigated, incorporated, and become an original voice in styles spanning the globe on so many instruments he lost count long ago. In the process, he has expanded the parameters of popular music, stylistically and instrumentally, to a degree that few can claim.

Backstage at last summer's Montreal Jazz Festival, Lindley is modest about his vast achievements in instrumental mastery.

'Some instruments have weird tunings, and they do elude me. The traditional Portuguese guitar has very strange tunings, and I can't play it. There are some Mexican instruments that also have odd tunings; they have high-pitched strings in the middle of the fretboard, and again, that system of tuning eludes me. I actually want to take

some lessons. I want to study with professor A.J. Racy at the University of California. He is a professor of ethnomusicology and specialises in Arabic instruments. I am going to learn in monthly instalments, the study programme is very intense and it will depend how quickly I can assimilate the music and the technique as to how fast I can progress. It is all very structured; you learn certain chord sequences that enable you to move onto other sequences, so it is pretty

complicated. The people I know who can play these Arabic instruments are all telling me to keep playing the stuff I do already. They say, "Keep doing the John Lee Hooker blues stuff – no one is doing that!" Really, it's just a personal wish of mine to be able to learn these new techniques and new instruments. It is a challenge, which I like, but the other part of the challenge is that the older you get, the more effort you have to put in, physically, to maintain the flexibility you need to play. Secondly, you need to keep your mental faculties going to be able to learn and assimilate the lessons you are undertaking. I actually find I can learn more than I did earlier in my life. I have no idea why that is, maybe because I am forcing my mind to work harder; I don't know. I am 71 now, and I started working on these instruments when I was about 62 and I'm trying to get to grips with them still. There are some specific pieces that have different versions that I work on, and some have very odd tunings that I constantly get wrong.'

David has worked with musicians as diverse as Leonard Cohen, Rod Stewart, Terry Reid, and his most famous collaborator, Jackson Browne. Let's go back to the first instrument the young David Lindley mastered, setting him off on his magical route to session and solo stardom.

'It was a baritone ukulele,' he recalls, 'and from there I went to a five-string banjo, and I learned classical guitar at the same time. I wanted to learn some flamenco, but I figured that anything with strings on it was fair game. Then I got into the banjo so much I started to make some money playing as well. My mom was getting a little worried about her son the hillbilly, which in middle-class San Marino, California, wasn't quite the thing, you know? But I started teaching, and I got a job playing at Disneyland, so then it was okay, because I was making some money from playing. But in my family, it was still thought of as a pretty low-class instrument – for a family that was raised on classical music. My uncle was a classical pianist, and my brother and I grew up listening to Bach and Scarlatti, and Dvorák... and then there was Flatt and Scruggs, Little Richard, Elvis, and the Everly Brothers.'

Did you find it easy to learn to play at a young age?

'I did. I had a knack for it, and I also had an ear for music, and a sense of time, and I worked hard with those. My brother played





piano, and he always used a metronome to help with his timing, so I heard that a lot when I was playing. No one was as “on the timing” as Little Richard was.’

For David, though, the road to musical proficiency has not been entirely free of the odd bend along the way.

‘Harmony,’ answers David with a wry smile when asked about the aspect that brought him to a temporary stop in his career path. ‘I heard people like The Neville Brothers and Ry Cooder, and I just wanted to be able to play what I heard. I spoke to Ry Cooder about it, and he said exactly the same thing. He said he would hear Flaco Jiménez on the accordion and think, “I have to play that” – and

then I think all musicians do it. You hear something that really touches you, and you know that you want to explore that sound, be able to make it, and to play that way for yourself. When something hits you like that, you become obsessed, and you cannot rest until you have mastered what you have heard.’

Having spent his professional life as the go-to guy for musicians, studios and producers all over the US, David is starting to reign back on his session availability, not only to facilitate his studying, but because he is in a position to be somewhat more choosy about the projects he wishes to enjoy.

‘I have put the word out because in my

career I have played a lot of stuff that I didn’t really like or enjoy, so now at this stage, I am a lot pickier. Having said that, you get some calls that you really have to do. I got a call from Bonnie Raitt telling me that there was a tribute for Jackson Browne going on, and we could do this, and that, and I’m like, “Yeah! Put me down for that.” Then there was a tribute to JJ Cale being planned, and Eric Clapton did all the organising and got all the musicians there together to do that. He called me at my house, and my wife answered the phone, and she’s like [whispers], “It’s Eric Clapton... on the phone... here at our house!” So that kind of call, you say yes to.’

Although a veteran of recording studios for the last 50 years, David is not inclined to bemoan the old days when sessions consisted of equipment made from string and baling wire, and two takes was one take too many.

‘I’m fine with modern technology, if it fools me. What I mean by that is that they can run modern computer technology in the studio that will give you the same feel and ambiance you used to get from analogue tapes back in the day, and I am fine with that, I have no problems working that way at all.’

David’s world-renowned instrument collection is always going to be a fascinating subject for discussion, but first, is there just one of his guitars that manages to retain the top spot in his eyes?

‘My favourite is a Takamine 12-fret, single cutaway with African mahogany back and sides. That’s the one I played on the live CD I did with Jackson Browne, and that’s the one that is always close by me at home, and it’s the one I pick up and play the most. I went down to Takamine, and they showed me round, and I was in such a dilemma because they were all so good. My collection is vast. It is scattered all over Southern California, but I am getting rid of things that I just don’t play anymore. I am still getting new things all of the time, though – I just bought an electric bouzouki that has a fabulous sound to it, and it’s something that’s really easy to play. My daughter is going to really love playing it, if she can get it away from me. My wife does get a little impatient with my never-ending collecting, but I have embraced “the law of the empty case”. Whenever you leave the house, always carry an empty instrument case with you, and then if it comes back with something in it, no one is going to notice. It’s that simple!’

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DAVID IMMERGLÜCK

STILL FLYING HIGH

WORDS: TERI SACCONI

It's positively energising to meet a musician who is as enthusiastic about his career as Dave Immerglück of Counting Crows. At age 53, Immerglück is a bona fide veteran of the studio and road. Although the Crows enjoyed their biggest commercial success during the 90s via their colossal debut *August and Everything After* (1993), they continue to make music and tour tirelessly.

When the Berkeley California natives recently hit the UK in support of their latest album *Somewhere Under Wonderland* it was apparent that the secret of their on-going live success is an intuitive connection the band members share. Immerglück is at the apex of this rapport. "Immy" has a magic touch in the acoustic guitar realm (among other instruments), but his powers are derived both from his innate creativity and a hardcore work ethic he's maintained for more than four decades. His entire approach has clearly paid off not only in this band, but also with artists such as John Hiatt, and others.

Dave is palpably fired up about music when we speak to him on the band's most recent UK tour. He's ecstatic about the present and the future regarding his music. He shares much of himself in conversation and is as pleasant as they come and remains the perpetual student of music.

Counting Crows is enjoying a renaissance with the release of *Somewhere Under Wonderland*...

Our record is getting more action than we

even expected and we're very proud of it. It's kind of exciting because we'll be on the road until the end of 2015, globe trotting all over the world. We're very happy with the way it captures many aspects of us. I'm really fond of how much ground we covered on the record, and we also kept elements of spontaneity in there. I've worked with [Adam] Duritz since the 80s and many of the other musicians for almost as long, and we have managed to grow together. We can anticipate so much, yet there is still lots of spontaneity we captured here. We captured so many great performances from the band. The sparks still fly which is amazing.

Your history with the Crows has been a bit transient with you coming and going over the years...

My history with the band is bizarre. I was there very early on; I recorded the first record with them. Then I left and played with John Hiatt for about four and a half years. I came back in 1998 and have been pretty solidly around since.

Who are your biggest influences?

I grew up in the Bay Area of San Francisco and have an older brother whose records I stole a lot which influenced me. Probably my main one was George Harrison, and then Peter Green became another big one for me as I got older. He was a really soulful player. At a recent radio show in London, I met Dave Gilmour and it was like meeting the Pope as he influenced me heavily; his taste, his bends, licks. I felt incredible







meeting him because growing up, he played slow enough where you could learn his parts. I had met Robert Plant earlier in the week at the taping of *Later With... Jools Holland*, and of course Page was huge to me.

Besides electric and acoustic guitar you play mandolin.

Yes, and I think of myself as a guitarist first and foremost, but speaking of playing many instruments, in the 80s I joined Camper Van Beethoven and I had gotten a pedal steel in a guitar shop and I had it but hadn't played it up to that point except to make some really bad sounds that made me want to run out off the room. Anyway, that band hired me to play pedal steel so I finally had to learn how to play it and I did learn it. Talk about pressure, right? I'm sure I'll be learning something new from that instrument forever. I did pick up mandolin over the time I played with them too but I didn't start using that until I played with John Hiatt. The thing with music is that you never stop learning new, fun things. It has such a youthful exuberance to it because it keeps you on your toes. Playing with John Hiatt was like my musical boot camp. He's an amazing guitarist. You never stop learning any instrument as a musician and you always strive to improve yourself. I've been playing guitar for 40 years and I still get a kick from learning new stuff. I'm sure even Richard Thompson is still trying to get better today.

You started on electric guitar, right?

Yeah, I had a very cheap guitar or two before graduating to a Strat. Then in high school I got my first acoustic: an old Takamine and I still have it. It's a copy of a Martin and I still use in the studio. It's been through the wars with me. I've collected a

lot of instruments over the years. I've got over a hundred and some are in New York while others are in storage in Los Angeles because I play sessions there. So I keep them stashed for my own use. With Crows, we cover lots of sonic terrain so I need a lot of guitars and I have specific ones for them. My Gibson L-00 that I got with Hiatt in 1995 is a replica of a 30s one and it's a magic guitar that I use in the studio and live. My mandolins are almost 100 years old and I trip out about their age sometimes. I got them from an old man outside of Nashville and I looked at them and thought, "These things have so many stories. So many generations of people that these have passed through. I'm just another story in these instruments that have these ghosts in them." I don't want them to get ruined on my watch, though – I want to pass them on to the next players. One's an A-1 and one's an A-4. I'm loyal to the A-style mandolin with the oval soundhole. The Fs are much more valuable, more expensive and more ornate but there's something about the simple design of the A-style mandolin that just sounds really great in my opinion.

You are bicoastal?

I moved to LA in the late 90s and I have a place in Manhattan so I bounce back and forth between those two places – I feel like James Bond some of the time. The Bay Area has a rich musical history from the 60s and the 80s; it was very fertile there musically so it was a great time to be there. Now, I can't really find people up there to play music nor are there many people up there who want to hear live music. It's changed a lot and I'm a bit sad about that. Change just has to happen, though, I guess. I always figured I'd resettle in the Bay Area when I first left to move to LA.

What do you think you'd have done were it not for music?

I have no idea. Before I got the music bug, for a second I thought I might raise thoroughbred dogs. We were into dogs growing up and I thought breeding dogs might be cool. But the music bug bit me when I was 12 so I never really did anything else except work for a time in a music store. Of course, the music business is filled with assholes at any level you reach, so it can get to you at times. But I realised at a very young age that I'd live in poverty to do this. I lucked out and got some good breaks along the way, but when you'd do something for free you know you've found your true passion and that was what I knew about myself. Even when I'm off the road with Counting Crows, I still play with people a lot in NY and LA – I never stop. It's like going to the gym for me. I just can't stop playing in bars, clubs, small local places just to keep me busy and active. I love it.

You must have spent half of your life on the road with all the bands, tours over the years – what toll does that have on you?

Being on the road is a lifelong lesson on how to get along, how to stay healthy while still enjoying life, and how to travel in close quarters within a male-dominated group. I never wanted to join the military but this is close to that! I'm lucky to have a job that resonates with some people in the world, and the reality is that most people spend their lives doing a job with no resonance. So the sleep deprivation, perpetual motion, and jet lag is a small price to pay to do this job. It's actually a charmed life.

Counting Crows' *Somewhere Under Wonderland* is out now.

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STRIKING MATCHES

PLAYING WITH FIRE

*Nashville country duo Striking Matches talk working with T-Bone Burnett, new album *Nothing But The Silence*, and Takamine guitars.*

WORDS: TERI SACCONI

Dynamic guitar duo Justin Davis and Sarah Zimmerman of Striking Matches are the new kids on the alt-country block.

The Nashville-based pairing proffers propulsive guitars and songs which are infused by rock, blues and a bit of country. Their debut album *Nothing But The Silence* expands on the promise of the music first featured in TV show *Nashville* (the duo contributed many numbers throughout the series over the last few years). They've played the legendary Grand Ole Opry more than a dozen times and garnered critical praise on their maiden trip to the UK to appear at 2014's Country 2 Country Festival (they also appeared at 2015's event).

Acoustic spoke to the earnest and savvy 27-year-olds as they were promoting the new release. With a ubiquitous buzz surrounding the compelling album and the wildly positive reception to Striking Matches as a live unit, the band is well on the way to stardom.

Tell us where you're from and how you two met.

Justin: Sarah is from outside of Philadelphia and I'm from just north of Atlanta, Georgia.

Sarah: We met at university in Nashville where we both were attending as guitar majors. It was the first week of school and we were both in our "guitar seminar" class, which is basically where all of the guitar majors get together and nerd out on guitar stuff. At the time no one really knew each other.

Justin: Sarah and I both had just moved to town and so we knew no one. The deal was that in order to introduce ourselves to the rest of the class, we had to pair up with one of the other first year students (a complete stranger) and improvise something on the spot in front of the upperclassmen. Sarah was the only girl in the class at the time and I remember no





one in the room full of boys wanting to be paired up with “the girl.” Sure enough though, I was paired up with Sarah and I asked her, “Do you know any blues?” Of course never having heard her play before I wasn’t aware that she’d been playing blues basically her whole life. So she pulled out her slide and made pretty much everyone’s jaw drop, including mine. We ended up getting a gracious applause out of the class and the teacher. It was really apparent that there was just “something” there when we played together. So from then we began working together.

Who are the people who influenced your guitar playing?

Sarah: Growing up, I listened to a lot of James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Chicago, Steely Dan, John Mayer; all kinds of different stuff. When I started getting into country music, I fell in love with the Dixie Chicks. I’m also a huge Patsy Cline fan – she’s my favourite! I think our music definitely reflects our influences. It’s fun because we have so many different influences from different genres that we like to play around with them all. One day we’ll write a country-rock tune, the next a folksy singer-songwriter type duet, and maybe the next day a country swing song. We’re always trying to break out of the box a little bit, so tapping into some of those influences really helps.

Justin: I was into country music from the start as my folks listened to it. My influences always tended to be guitar players such as Chet Atkins, Jerry Reed, Vince Gill, Lindsey Buckingham, Django Reinhardt, and Richard Thompson. I also got into classic rock like the Eagles, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Country always had my heart and soul though. The songwriting and subject matters of country music always hit home and reached me the most.

Sarah: Guitar-wise, Joni Mitchell for me was huge because of her crazy alternate tunings. I also love James Taylor and ditto for Richard Thompson.

Justin: We also want to give a shout out to Colin Linden who is a Nashville session guy and old school blues player. He’s great and is huge influence for us.

Do you always do your songwriting together?

Sarah: You know what, every song is so

different. Sometimes one of us will have a lyrical idea, and the other will come up with a musical idea to go with it, or the other way around. Sometimes we'll be in a room with a third person and come up with something out of thin air that day. Everything we've written has been at least the two of us, but sometimes with one other person.

Justin: Sometimes we'll start with a jam or a melody that one of us will have in our head and then we'll work up from there. Other songs will come from a lyric idea that we can't get out of our heads.

Sarah: 'Trouble Is As Trouble Does' started out as an acoustic guitar lick and then we both worked on it to get it where it is now.

Justin: We love writing with other people, but something different always happens when we write as just the two of us. We tend to be able to go to different places because we can write a song based around a jam that we might've played one time in a show when we were just "riffing" off each other.

What guitars do you play?

Sarah: We both play Takamine. My main guitar is a TAN45C model – it's my workhorse. Justin uses an ETN 70C which I don't think they make anymore. We play different parts, so mine has a different tone to it.

Justin: Sarah's sound is rounder than mine. Mine is a little bit sharper so that we sound different. We have different sounding guitars both acoustically and electrically. We both are collectors now and we have a number of Takamine instruments. My brother-in-law made me a guitar from scratch that is a prized possession of mine – I only play it at home.

What alternate tunings do you use?

Sarah: On one of the songs 'Never Gonna Love Again', Justin tunes down a half step and I play a lot of funky tunings. I play slide on that which kind of makes you play more open tunings.

What was it like working with T-Bone Burnett as your producer for *Nothing But The Silence*?

Sarah: He's very laid back; he doesn't dictate. We had the arrangements pretty much set in place before we even went in to make the record. There are a couple

that were new, but most of the songs we'd been playing live for so long, we knew what we wanted to do with them and where we wanted them to go. 'Never Gonna Love Again' went through some big changes. We'd made a demo of it, so I had the rhythm and the feel of it in my head. T-Bone wanted to take it somewhere else; the word he used was "tribal". I just remember sitting in the studio during the middle of tracking, shaking my head and thinking, "This is so wrong. I hate this." But when we got up and went in the control room and listened to it, it was a different story. I loved it! From the time it took to go from the main room to the control room, I completely changed my tune

Justin: It was a little scary at first when you hear where he wanted to go with it and when it all made sense, it felt really great. T-Bone is someone who you can trust and his experience brings him the respect that he so deserves. If he makes a suggestion, you just know that it's going to be worth doing. We learned that, obviously.

Did you write at all in the studio with T-Bone?

Justin: We had written most of it beforehand but we moulded it in the studio. We've worked with a lot of great writers like Hunter Hayes and Bonnie Baker. So we do write with other people. Thankfully, we were all on the same page throughout which was lucky and we had a good rapport with him.

Any challenges thus far that you've had to overcome in terms of being in the music business?

Justin: We always have tried to be different and within the industry, being different can sometimes be scary to people. But we trusted ourselves because we were having fun and audiences were getting it. We always wanted to stay true to ourselves so that has been one of the biggest challenges.

Finding your voices as songwriters must be a learning curve over the past five years as Nashville is pretty conservative...

Justin: It's tricky to be different there and we'd be asked to play fewer guitars on songs or to keep our songs shorter, but we stuck to our guns and we had the right people in our corner supporting us. If we didn't have that, I don't know what we would've done.





Your music is multi-genre, are you getting radio play on different types of format?

Sarah: We didn't set out to make a one-genre record; we were just going for whatever format we could reach – we're up for anything.

What inspires you to write?

Sarah: We listen to all kinds of stuff musically – lots of old stuff which is very inspiring.

Justin: Lyrically, life experiences we're going through or the issues that our friends are dealing with inspire us.

'Trouble Is As Trouble Does' illustrates your sublime fingerpicking talents.

Sarah: I remember sitting down in my room with my acoustic guitar and I had written that line on 'Trouble Is As Trouble Does' – all of a sudden, I just started playing the riff. I don't know where it came from, but I had a capo on the third fret, and there it was. I played it for Justin and he loved it. It became the song that starts our shows, and it kicks off the record.

Justin: It's become a nice introduction to who we are. It's us both going at it on this one lick; we start playing it in unison and then I go up an octave. We've tried to see how fast we can play it – sometimes it gets pretty crazy.

Do you both play the mandolin?

Sarah: Yeah, we both do but I played it on the record.

Did you two play most of the instruments yourselves on the album?

Sarah: Yeah, it was basically just the two of us playing everything except one song where T-Bone hopped in on acoustic guitar – that was great.

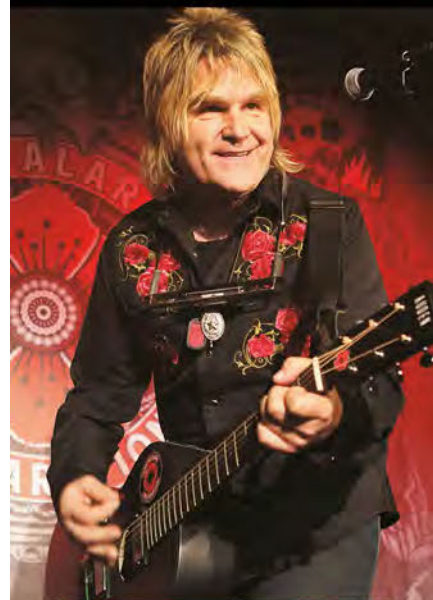
Do you have any practical advice for budding songwriters and performers?

Justin: Any chance that you've got to perform, do it. Play anywhere you can. Don't worry if it's in an empty place because just being onstage as often as you can is experience. The more you play, the more live experience you have, and the better you get.

Striking Matches' Nothing But The Silence is out on March 23.

www.strikingmatches.com

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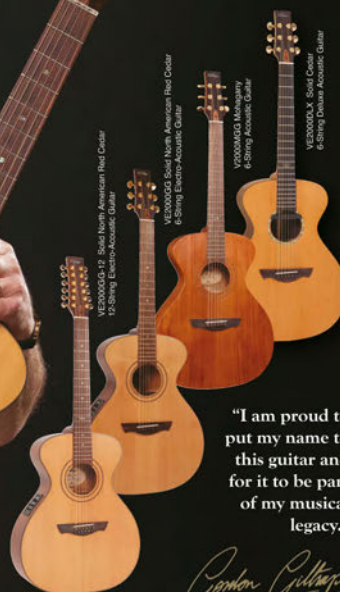
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CALEXICO

For the better part of two decades, Calexico has crossed musical barriers, embracing a multitude of styles, variety in instrumentation, and well-cultivated signature sounds. Joey Burns talks to *Acoustic* about their eclectic new album *Edge Of The Sun*.

WORDS: STEPHEN BENNETT



Calexico. The Sound of the Great South West... Widescreen, romantic evocations of a sun-bleached, desert landscape, of Sam Shepard-meets-Zane Grey, of mysterious and moody, nylon-string, border balladry... all that stuff.

So it's somewhat strange to pick up the phone and hear guitarist and principal songwriter, Joey Burns, calling, not from his hometown of Tucson, Arizona, but from the distinctly synth/cabaret musical heart of Berlin. Strange, that is, until it becomes clear that for all their perceived embodiment of a particular style and location, Calexico is one of the most international bands around, both in line-up and in their approach to writing, recording and live performance. It's the perfect irony - the master purveyors of Tex-Mex, Mariachi-fuelled Americana simply don't do borders.

Burns loves Berlin. He loves to travel, full stop; to soak up sounds and influences from other cultures in order to distill new elements into the evolving alchemy of the band he formed in the mid-90s with drummer, John Convertino, while studying at the University of California. Calexico's current label, City Slang, is based in Berlin and it's from their headquarters that Burns, a delightfully engaging and articulate spokesman, calls *Acoustic* to talk about the new album and much more.

Joey: It's also [multi-instrumentalist band-member] Martin Wenk's hometown. Our previous stop was the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow and it's wonderful to be able to get that sense of not only the roots but the continuing threads of a tradition that's such an integral part of music in America. Over here, we see all that coming together, whether it be Mediterranean or Celtic, whatever the source, and feeding into people's interpretations of jazz, rock, punk - everything - there's a real openness to it.

That concept of "openness" keeps returning as a cornerstone of the Calexico philosophy. Burns goes on to note how western Europe, in particular, gave African-American jazz musicians in the first half of the 20th century a place to go where they were accepted; a vital, often overlooked, aspect of the development of American popular music that also allowed the nascent UK jazz scene in the 1940s to grow, via the latest 78s carried back as treasure to London from the US

air-force bases in East Anglia. Europe, though, is far from being Calexico's main source of musical inspiration. Wandering the streets of Tucson around 2002, Burns was entranced by the dazzling, Afro-Latin Cumbia rhythms emanating from a Mexican restaurant called Little Cafe Poca Cosa. The steamy, slippery 'Crystal Frontier', from the album *Hot Rail*, appeared soon after and that irresistibly propulsive magic is further evident on the new disc via the sparkling 'Cumbia de Donde'.

Joey: It's been fantastic with *Edge Of The Sun* to bounce ideas off our keyboardist, Sergio Mendoza. In a sense, he's been the main collaborator on the new material [the album features a number of "outside" contributions]. It was important to have him around as both a close friend and a studio fixture while John moved from Ohio to El Paso, Texas [where Convertino's wife now teaches at the university]. Sergio was born and raised in Nogales, Arizona, so while he's got that specific musical background, he still loves jazz, hip-hop and all the 60s and 70s stuff at the same time. We encourage each other to listen to new things.

Burns cites 'Cumbia de Donde' as capturing the spirit they were aiming for even

though it's stylistically far-removed from some of the other songs on the album. He sees the soaringly upbeat, 'Falling From The Sky', for example, as a sonic collision between Flaming Lips and the Mexican band, Kinky (though he's delighted by *Acoustic* comparing it to the melodic, Antipodean anthems of the Muttonbirds and the Go-Betweens).

Joey: 'Falling From The Sky' just came out. It was a case of "don't stop yourself... turn the internal critic off". Plus, the Arthur Lee echoes really came through. We've covered (the Love classic) "Alone Again Or" because it fits our sound so perfectly and has always been such a huge influence.

In order to find a shape and overall feel for the new album, Calexico de-camped to Coyoacán, the bohemian enclave of Mexico City that was once home to the creative likes of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera among others...

Joey: I'd heard of it from reading about how Hernan Cortez meeting Montezuma there. Cortez set up his headquarters behind the massive stone walls that are still standing today. The colonial architecture's stunning; beautiful colours,



volcanic rock... and as well as all the artists and musicians, they've got great food! Going there wasn't so much about trying to reconnect with the roots of Mexican music in general, more about being somewhere different for us that had a unique ambience yet was also accessible. We'd been once to Mexico City for a festival in 2010 and loved it, even though there can be all kinds of logistical problems playing South and Central America. We really wanted to go back and the idea of making it a temporary base for our songwriting gave us that chance.

This isn't a new approach for Caalexico; the previous record, *Algiers*, saw the band relocate to New Orleans and the evidence of their having instantly absorbed the distinct musical vibe of that city is clear throughout the album.

Joey: If this one feels more "urban" at times it's probably an unconscious thing. Though we do try to mix it up. *Algiers* had a more pastoral feel, maybe a more cohesive style and approach to arranging, mixing and production, whereas that sense of an overall ambience is broken up more on *Edge Of The Sun* by songs like 'Beneath The City Of Dreams' and 'Tapping On The Line'. Even before we invited friends to help out [on the numerous collaborations] it already had that feeling of change and exploration about it. I suppose, in a way, it matches the spontaneous, even sometimes chaotic vibe, of Mexico City. There's a genuinely vibrant spirit about the place. We were there a week after Easter but the celebrations were still going on! Fireworks – the whole thing. That's one of the reasons I enjoy being in the south, in what [writer and musician] Ned Sublette calls the "festival and saints belt"; that Latin take on things. It's very celebratory, much more in tune with the seasonal calendar than tends to be the case further north.

And how about those collaborations...

Joey: It started with 'Bullets & Rocks'. We listened back to the basic tracks and thought, "Hmm, wouldn't it be great if..." so we called Sam Beam [Iron & Wine], sent the early recordings to him and he took the ball and really ran with it. The whole thing kind of grew organically from there. He came back really quickly with vocals and a wonderful addition to the outro, where things open up with the analogue-



delay trumpet solo and the repeated refrain that floats and rises over it. That might never have happened without Sam. We'd bounce ideas back and forth over the internet and I kept getting back these wonderful results. Maybe that's down to the freedom of him being able to work from his own home.

And maybe why, as a result, Burns is now talking of putting more tracks together with Beam to commemorate the 10th anniversary of their first joint musical venture on 2005's *In The Reins* EP.

Joey: It's definitely that alchemy; the joy of working with other creative artists. It was the same with Neko Case. She added lower harmonies underneath her more recognisable, higher vocal style and took the material to another level. We were on the edge of our seats in the studio, hearing that for the first time.

The album also features sterling contributions from Ben Bridwell (Band of Horses), Gaby Moreno, Amparo Sanchez (again) and, perhaps most intriguing, the Greek instrumental band, Takim.

Joey: We were in Athens around the time of the World Cup Final and [while their German manager was, not surprisingly, otherwise detained] went to check out Lizard Sound Studio. Takim were recording there and we were mesmerised by this wild, improvisational sound coming from completely traditional instrumentation. We ended up trading a Caalexico song or two ['Stray', from the *Black Light* album, currently features on the Takim website] in return for them guesting on the album. We definitely could've developed that angle much further given time.

It turns out lead-Animal, Eric Burdon, of all people, was there, too and he, alongside

Takim, should feature on an upcoming bonus track version of the new CD.

Joey: It's important that any "incoming" stuff sits within the aesthetic of the band so it doesn't feel bolted on. It has to feel organic and allow the rhythm section to underpin the whole thing with what's still a trademark feel. Having said that, we're lucky in the sense that John's drumming style is very adaptable, particularly to an acoustic, softer sound. He has a jazz musician's sensibility and dynamic range – he's a huge Art Blakey fan – but equally, he can certainly lay on the necessary rock crunch when it's needed.

Burns describes how, in his early teens, prior to his move to the now familiar nylon-stringed acoustic, he took up the bass in his high-school jazz band, developing a particular love for, quote, "the Latin stuff".

Joey: The way it frees the bass up. You're not stuck to the quarter notes, there's more movement. And I always gravitated towards the more minor-key modes of Latin music, anyway. Even at home, of all the things my mother used to play on the piano, my favourites were those minor-key lullabies like 'All The Pretty Little Horses'. There's a direct line from there to the 60s bands with that same feel [he cites 'And I Love Her' as a classic example]. And, of course, now, with the nylon-strings, the lower register... I've always been passionate about that. And again, via the high-school jazz band, all those influences from various cultures, be it French with Debussy and Eric Satie or through classical; they all bring something unique to the mix.

The talk of influences widens; from the deep intensity of those minor chord progressions so integral to Latin music, via Talking Heads' take on Afro-Cuban rhythms, the poetry of Lorca and Munch's "The Scream" to that wonderful documentary charting the lives and music of the travelling Roma people, *Latcho Drom*. Burns certainly doesn't mind exploring the dark side in search of inner beauty. He also insists on the listeners right to expect a good story delivered by a voice with character; Shane MacGowan, Bob Dylan ('Time Out of Mind' being a particular favourite) or the late recordings of Omara Portuondo heading the list. A current instrumental inspiration is the Damon Albarn/Brian Eno *Africa Sessions* interpretation of Terry Riley's 'In C' with Malian musicians – a great modernist work



channelled through ancient, traditional sounds, instruments and techniques.

Joey: Timeless, trance-like, meditative. That's what I listen to at home when I'm cooking for the kids and there's chaos all around the place. People ask about the connection between our sound and where we live but it's not really about us consciously trying to capture a sense of landscape. That feeling maybe comes automatically out of us trying to create the space and openness we talked about earlier. It should come regardless of where you are writing or playing; whether you're in the city or sitting watching the sea, it's about letting that physical, external stimulus weigh in on the internal, the emotional. And always leaving room for the listener, of course.

Edge Of The Sun's beautiful, achingly melancholy closer, 'Follow The River', deals with perseverance in the face of adversity; keeping going until there's

light at the end of the tunnel (very *Latcho Drom*). Burns is particularly drawn to its stoic approach towards instrumentation, its minimalism, and yes... its openness. The distillation of the Calexico credo in a single song, perhaps?

Joey: The more tracks we added, the more we realised less is more. We want space in the music.

He considers this for a moment, then...

Joey: It's just... what we do.

And no one does it better. Very few come close. So with that, and with characteristic grace and charm, Joey Burns draws the proceedings to a close and rides off into the cactus-silhouetted heat-haze of a Berlin sunset. Possibly.

**Calexico's *Edge Of The Sun* is out April 13 via *City Slang*.
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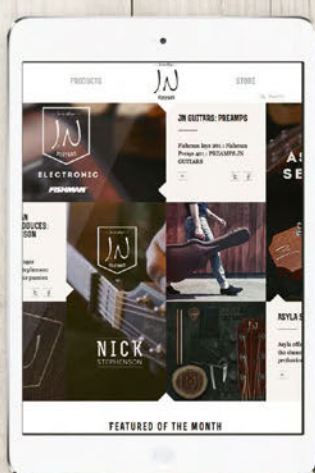


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IF THE HAT

PITS

The awards are mounting, the critics have been won over, the legions of fans are waiting, the album is just about to drop, and the shows are sold out – James Bay is standing in the eye of a storm. We spend an afternoon in the studio with the hottest new guitar player in town.



WORDS BY GUY LITTLE IMAGES BY RICHARD ECCLESTONE

“Hold back the river let me look in your eyes, hold back the river so I can stop for a minute and see where you hide, hold back the river, hold back...” I hear James Bay sing. Despite being all over the radio, I’m not listening to it via the wireless – my ears

are pressed up against studio two’s door at *The Premises* studios on the Hackney/Shoreditch border of East London. James Bay is here rehearsing for a sold out KOKO gig the following evening and a subsequent sold out UK tour in April. He’s not been in London for long; returning from gigging in Australia via

more gigs in Los Angeles, I expect to find Bay slumped against the studio wall in a haze of jet lag mainlining caffeine – but the 24-year-old songwriter is in good form. And, why not? James Bay is the hottest ticket in town.

Setting down his guitar, he welcomes me into the studio via a set up of Gibsons,

Epiphones, Taylors, and Martins, and begins to tell me about his trip down under. Having never visited Australia prior to 2015, James landed in the country for the first time to a platinum-selling single: 'Hold Back The River'. He's taking a lunch break, and in between mouthfuls of a panini, he talks of being in a guitar store hearing a kid play the riff to that song.

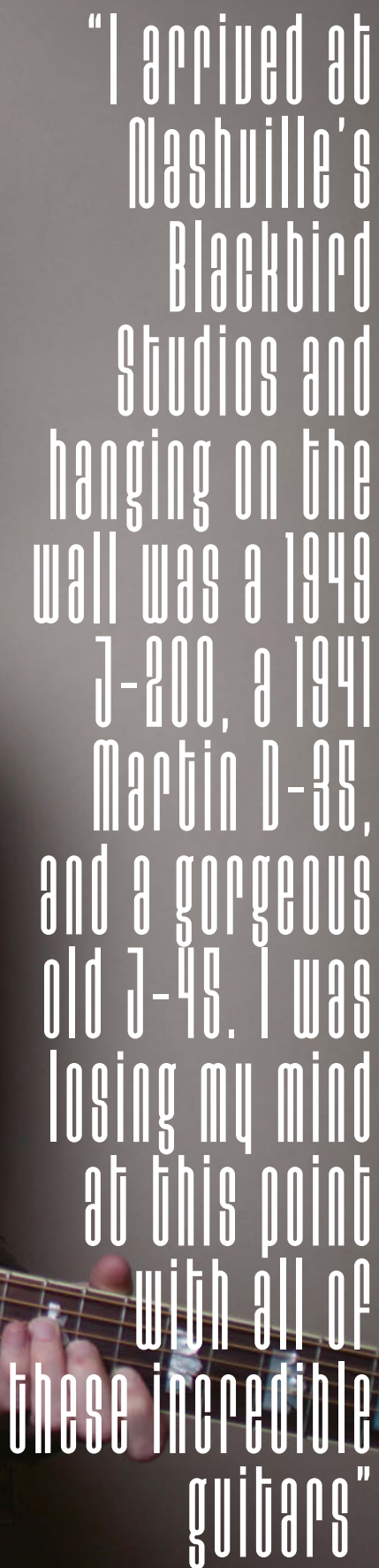
'I just stood next to them and waited for them to realise it was me,' he laughs, sipping from a can of Coca Cola. 'It was so crazy in Australia with the single going platinum before the album was out, but it's good to be back in the UK and to get ready for the shows here.'

James is eloquent and charismatic; he's dressed in skinny black jeans and a leather jacket, effortlessly channelling a Johnny Depp-like look and charm – let alone razor-sharp cheekbones and soon-to-be trademark hat. His looks are as recognisably dynamic and spirited as his music – something that goes a long way in understanding how one goes about getting the trendiest gig in the business: the Burberry London Fashion Week show (and the legion of female fans no doubt already queuing outside KOKO).

'Christopher Bailey, Burberry's head guy, discovered my stuff – he and his music team are all about "undiscovered" British music. They got in touch and decided that for his show, he wanted to use my music. It was as simple as that,' he says, relaxing into a leather couch.

However you put it, the James Bay juggernaut was rolling long before the release of *Chaos And The Calm*, all but guaranteeing his ascension to songwriter superstardom. Since the release of his debut EP *The Dark Of The Morning* in July 2013, photos of him have been blazoned all over the internet, billboards, magazines, and newspapers. At the end of last year, he was the runner-up in the BBC Sound Of 2015 poll, and was also awarded the annual Brits Critics' Choice award.





"I arrived at Nashville's Blackbird Studios and hanging on the wall was a 1949 J-200, a 1941 Martin D-35, and a gorgeous old J-45. I was losing my mind at this point with all of these incredible guitars"

With previous Brit winners including Adele and Sam Smith, his distinctively honeyed voice has everyone asking, "Who the hell is this guy and can he live up to the hype?" I think so.

James Bay remembers his first gig well. He was 15 years old, and he caught the train from his hometown, Hitchin, to London to see Paolo Nutini play Shepherd's Bush Empire. Nine years later and it's him on that esteemed stage – and as he's rehearsing for two nights there, he can't quite believe it.

'The crazy thing about it is that I always wondered if I'd ever get to do one night at Shepherd's Bush, and if I did, that was easily going to be enough to fulfil the demand. Selling the venue out in a week, and then adding another show, blew my mind.'

It's not just his shows this side of the Atlantic that are selling out. His shows in the States are just as in demand – including the venerable Bowery Ballroom in NYC.

'It's hard to put that into words, actually. I'm just there in the midst of this entire thing going on around me, standing and staring,' he says. 'In the first few hours, nine of the US shows sold out. It truly is incredible.'

During the week in which the UK's culture secretary Sajid Javid was quoted saying that he "has no problem with a healthy second market" and that "ticket touts are classic entrepreneurs" [Nigel Morris, *The Independent*], we checked out how much people were willing to pay for a ticket to Bay's sold out KOKO show. The figure was a hefty £100 on StubHub.

'Wow. The tickets for that went on sale for something like £15. It feels like people are being robbed. There's something exciting about saying you went to see so-and-so for £12, right? That's how much I paid to see Paulo Nutini back when I was a teen. Ticket touting gets me down. It just doesn't feel fair. People who buy in bulk with no genuine interest in going to the show themselves are selfish.'

James spent two years playing open mic nights while studying at the Brighton Institute of Modern Music (fellow breakthrough guitar guy George Ezra, with whom Bay shares management, studied at the Bristol institute) and, eventually, after hearing people say he should give it a go in London, he made his way to the capital. Bay played the Abbey Tavern

in Kentish Town, and during the first song, someone walked into the pub, got himself a drink, and sat down in front of him. Not too out of the ordinary, right? However, he had a broadcast quality camera on his shoulder, suddenly filming James from two feet in front of the stage.

'I got chatting to him afterwards and he said, "I'm a cameraman and I liked your first song so I filmed the second two." We swapped details and he put one of the songs up on YouTube,' he recalls.

'After that happened, I had to go back home. I couldn't afford to live in London and I was doing a bar job in Hitchin to bring in some cash. A couple of months after that guy recorded me in the Abbey Tavern, a record label in New York found that video on YouTube and asked me to fly out to chat to them about signing. It was the best moment of my life when I got to say, "Look, guys, I'm out. I'm going to New York – they want me to sign a deal".

James Bay is in an exciting place right now. After that call from Republic Records in NYC (home to acoustic guitar luminary Ben Howard), he flew out and signed his record deal in the US before he signed in the UK (where he's signed to Virgin), he's now playing iconic venues for the first time, and he's on the cusp of releasing **Chaos And The Calm** – not to mention being accosted by Taylor Swift after a gig in Nashville, exclaiming that she has his tracks on her playlist. He counts Kings of Leon, the Stones, and Eric Clapton as some of his fundamental influences. He has the tender fragility of Ray LaMontagne on tracks like 'Move Together', while he channels soaring Springsteen choruses and guitar lines on 'Get Out While You Can'. One thing's for certain: Bay is ready to champion British guitar music.

'Guitar is the reason I play music. It's where I started, and it's where I'll always feel most comfortable – and it's where I'll be most excited in terms of making music. If people feel like I'm flying the flag for guitar players, then I'm all for that. Clapton was a huge thing for me – it was all about the 'Layla' riff. I was 11 when I first heard it, and I just knew I had to be able to do that. I've never been the guy who "has to be that singer" – the guitar was what grabbed me and fascinated me.'

As James was first picking up a guitar in his early teens, YouTube was just



"GUITAR IS THE
REASON I PLAY
MUSIC. IT'S WHERE
I STARTED, AND
IT'S WHERE I'LL
ALWAYS FEEL MOST
COMFORTABLE"

becoming a thing – and so he'd binge on guitar videos day-in day-out.

'I was more interested in just trying to listen and play by ear. I didn't have the patience for any kind of tabs or any kind of music score. YouTube opened up this world to me of guitarists offering tips, being able to look at people like Stevie Ray Vaughan and learn from them. YouTube brought it all to life for me.'

He latterly started a band in his hometown called the Jet Kings, with him on rhythm guitar and his older brother on vocal duties.

'I was inspired by this introvert thing, though. I did think one day I would go it alone. In each band, I recognised I was always the person bored of that version of us as a band. I always wanted to move on to the next thing. I was never the frontman – I was the guy at the side of the stage playing the guitar, because, well, I just wanted to play guitar. At 19, when I was leaving for Brighton, I was done with that version of us as a band and went to BIMM to do this thing on my own.'

James Bay's *Chaos And The Calm* is out on March 23 and was recorded in Nashville, between tour dates in the UK and US, in the fabled Blackbird Studios with Kings of Leon long-term collaborator and Tom Waits engineer Jacquire King.

'The best way to describe landing in Nashville is that it's just a massive feeling – it's a real moment. Nashville has its country music; you'll get off the plane and know straight away that it's there, but then you go a little deeper into Nashville and that disappears and the music gets more interesting and obscure. They're pioneering new sounds out there all of the time. For all of the musical history that's in that place, there are lots of fantastic new things going on all of the time. I tried to soak up as much of that as possible. I arrived at Blackbird Studios and there was a 1949 J-200 just hanging on the wall, a 1941 Martin D-35 was there in the room, and then a gorgeous old J-45 with the wood around the soundhole almost scratched to nothing. I was losing my mind at this point with all of these incredible guitars, and after three days went by, I'd started to chill out about the whole thing, and I stepped outside for a breather and the gates to the ground opened up for this huge bus to pull through. Painted on the side

of it was a horse running through the desert surrounded by a rainbow – and out stepped Willie Nelson. Although I'd gone outside to calm down, the opposite happened. I was just in awe of the whole experience, particularly so because of working with Jacquire King. I got to the point where I had enough songs to make the album, but I didn't know anything about production. My manager asked me to make a list of my favourite records from the last 10 years and Kings Of Leon/Jacquire King were at the top of my list, but I never thought that'd happen. It almost sounded a bit stupid to say it out loud, but he saw the video that guy uploaded to YouTube of me in the pub in Kentish Town and said he'd love to work with me.'

Chaos And The Calm is an elegant intro to James' songwriting prowess, with a sound owing as much to 70s rock and roll as to the legendary introspective songwriters, Bay's beguiling romanticism abounding on 'When We Were On Fire', 'Scars', and 'If You Ever Want To Be In Love'. There are almost two sides to James Bay: the solo troubadour, and the rock outfit frontman. The lines between the two personalities are so cleverly interwoven, it's all a bit irrelevant. Just as Ryan Adams leaps from one to the other, Bay, too, does it expertly, creating a charismatic debut record in the process.

'I'm a guitar player, but I am part of a band. I want to make a bigger sound and still channel that quintessential songwriter. Moving forward, guitar playing is something I want to showcase even more. I wanted to be modest on my debut record, so I wanted to be a bit subtle and not throw licks all over it – as much as I love to do that. I start writing with an acoustic guitar most of the time – chords, riffs, and then a vocal melody. I'll sometimes start writing on a piano, as I did with 'If You Ever Want To Be In Love'. My process varies for each song, but melody and chords come first. I'm always thinking about how the songs will sound on a live stage and playing in larger venues for the UK tour means one thing: how can I make the biggest impact for a bigger show?'

James Bay plays sold out shows across the UK and US throughout March and April 2015.

James supports Taylor Swift on the European leg of her 1989 world tour. His debut album Chaos And The Calm is out on March 23.

www.jamesbaymusic.com



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JAMES BAY ON HIS SJ-200 & 64 J-50

'I've got a 1964 Gibson J-50. For the first time in my life I was recently in the position where I could go and get myself a fancy new guitar so I bought the '64 J-50 – it's a pretty indulgent purchase, right? I went to this guitar shop in Guildford on a Sunday afternoon, just spending a couple of hours playing guitar. At this point I'd spent the last six or so years playing the same acoustic – a new Epiphone jumbo body that I'd drag around open mics. I wanted something nice, I guess, and I wanted to take some time thinking about what felt good under my fingers – and this is great. There's a lot to be said about old guitars. The wood is often so resonant and not covered in lacquer, and this one is amazingly warm – it does the right thing. I've got a Fishman soundhole pickup in it at the moment, and I'm not too sure about it. I'm probably going to take it out – it's just not the right one for the guitar, and I'm not into the soundhole thing. This guitar is best unplugged and mic'd up.'

'I've also got this Gibson SJ-200 [pictured above] I'm using. The jumbo Epiphone I had did the job, but I borrowed an SJ-200 out in the US recently and it was so great. I love the dark sunburst on this one I've got. I wrote a lot of **Chaos And The Calm** based around the low, big-bodied sound. I tune my guitars down a whole tone (DGCFA), and the jumbo body gives me that low, guttural sound which I love and which is becoming one of my things. I'll try and go guitar shopping when I'm in different countries, but I just seem to stumble upon things. There's a Gibson ES-330 1964 that I found in this ramshackle old shop called the Music Inn in NYC which was full of these homemade fretless guitars with aluminum fretboards – it was just a really bizarre shop – but in the corner was this guitar and it was perfect. I couldn't turn it down. I've got Ernie Ball Earthwood 13s on my acoustics at the moment – I fell in love with those strings. I'm pretty much set up with what I need guitar-wise, and I hate to be "that guy" but I'm in a good place with my guitars. I love those Harmony Buck Owens guitars Ryan Adams uses – he really bashes those about – and I've always felt like Patrick James Eggle acoustics are some of the best.'

'I play through an LR Baggs Venue DI and I'm about to check out some new pickups from them, too. On the electric side of things, the Tone King Sky King amp, made by a called Marc Bartel in Baltimore, just sings. All the sounds have to be clean, clear and then hitting the guitars harder is how I make the sound break up a little. I like the idea of putting an acoustic guitar through a VOX AC30 – I love that combination. It's still very real and wooden, but driven with so much power.'

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BREEDLOVE DISCOVERY CONCERT CE



Alun Lower finds a lot of love this new breed of laid back, all-purpose affordable acoustic

By and large, us guitarists are always looking for more. After all, who among us can claim never to have stared slack-jawed at some hand-built wonder sat just out of reach in the shop, with a price tag stretching nearly the length of the neck? Guitar reviewers like myself are no better, creaking open the case of the latest stunner from Lowden or Patrick James Eggle and spending hours poring over the minutest of detail and attentively listening out for the subtleties arising from the latest innovations in bracing design. But we must not forget that sometimes a great guitar feels perfect just for getting the basics exactly right, and that's just what Breedlove is trying to do with the Discovery Concert CE SB.

There are no airs and pretences here – no lofty (and fictional) claims of intimate workshop construction, no endorsements from guitarists that are never seen with the guitar after the initial photoshoot. Instead, all Breedlove looks to do is give you an instrument with serious bang for the buck and the kind of playability that anyone can enjoy, whether you're a die-hard enthusiast, a kid picking up his first six-string or someone that used to play that wants to rekindle their musical fire. The one promise you do get? That the result will be unmistakably Breedlove.





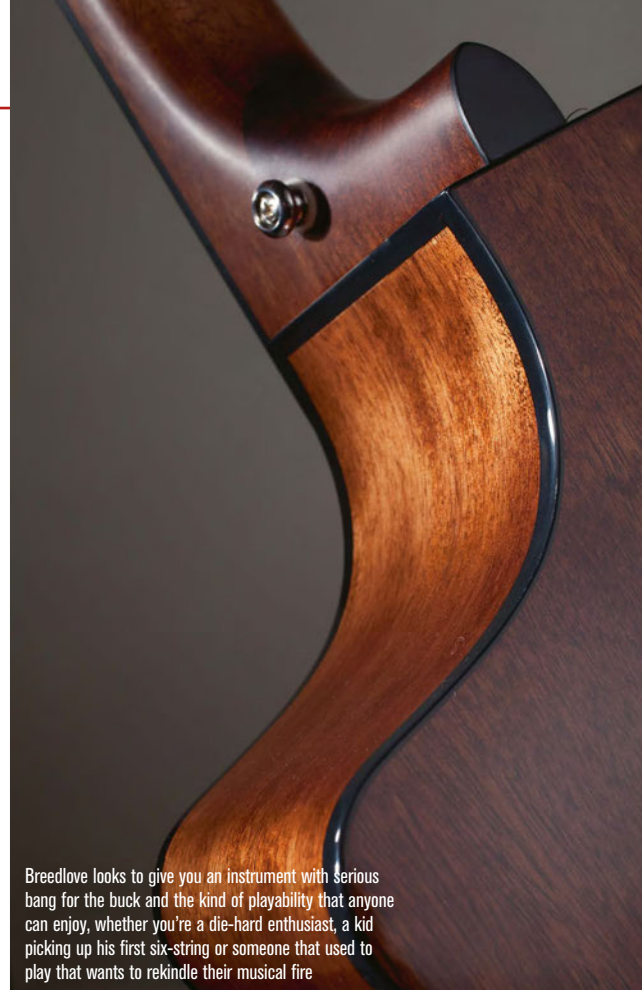
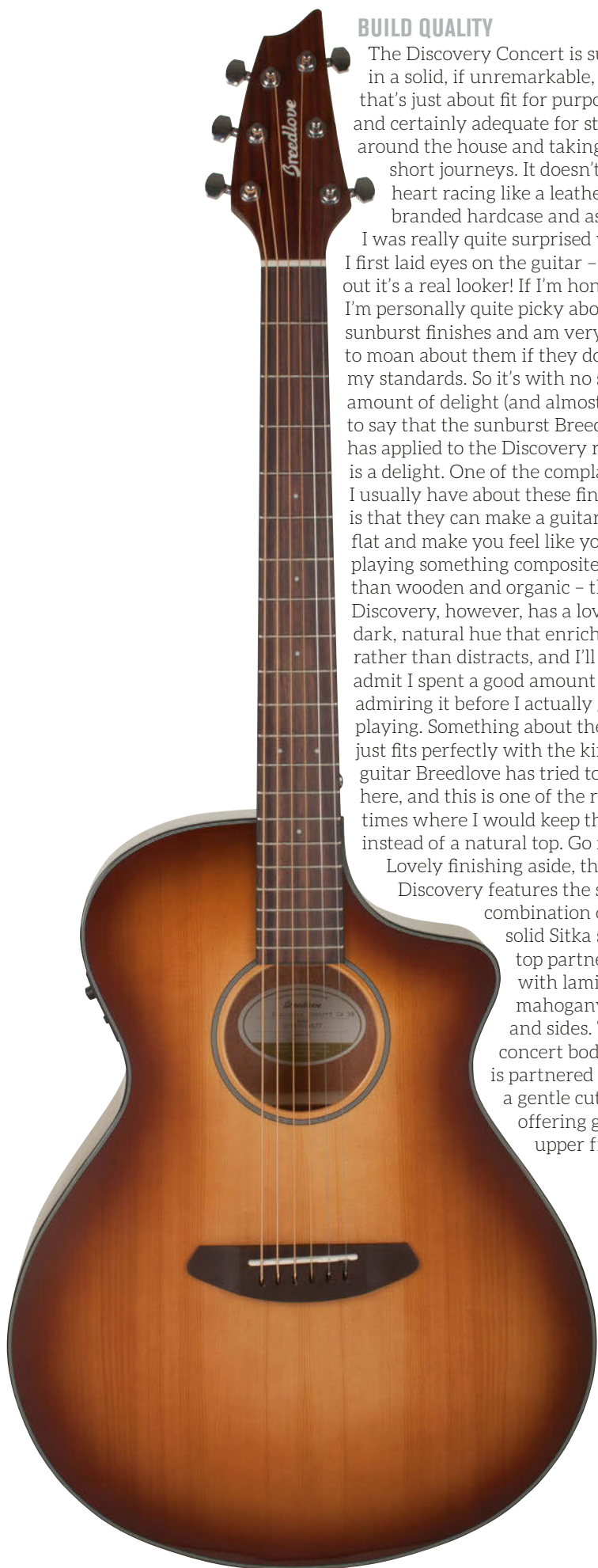
BUILD QUALITY

The Discovery Concert is supplied in a solid, if unremarkable, gigbag that's just about fit for purpose and certainly adequate for storing around the house and taking on short journeys. It doesn't get the heart racing like a leather-bound, branded hardcase and as such

I was really quite surprised when I first laid eyes on the guitar – turns out it's a real looker! If I'm honest, I'm personally quite picky about sunburst finishes and am very quick to moan about them if they don't meet my standards. So it's with no small amount of delight (and almost relief) to say that the sunburst Breedlove has applied to the Discovery really is a delight. One of the complaints I usually have about these finishes is that they can make a guitar look flat and make you feel like you're playing something composite rather than wooden and organic – the Discovery, however, has a lovely dark, natural hue that enriches rather than distracts, and I'll happily admit I spent a good amount of time admiring it before I actually got to playing. Something about the finish just fits perfectly with the kind of guitar Breedlove has tried to make here, and this is one of the rare times where I would keep the 'burst instead of a natural top. Go figure.

Lovely finishing aside, the

Discovery features the standard combination of a solid Sitka spruce top partnered with laminate mahogany back and sides. The concert body shape is partnered with a gentle cutaway, offering great upper fret



Breedlove looks to give you an instrument with serious bang for the buck and the kind of playability that anyone can enjoy, whether you're a die-hard enthusiast, a kid picking up his first six-string or someone that used to play that wants to rekindle their musical fire

access and giving the overall silhouette a very modern vibe. The concert sizing is light and manageable without being too dinky, measuring in at 15" at the lower bout with a 9" waist and an overall length of 20". Combined with a depth of 3.75" it's pretty much exactly what you want with a concert guitar and it feels very comfy when played both sitting and standing. The mahogany neck yields 20 well-finished and fitted frets nestled soundly in a rosewood fingerboard met by Breedlove's ever-distinctive headstock at the top.

Breedlove has pitched the guitar with versatility in mind, and to that effect it has outfitted the Discovery with a second strap button and a Fishman ISYS-T pickup and preamp combo, meaning that transferring from the bedroom to the studio or stage is as simple as strapping in and rocking out. It's basic but covers everything you need, including a built-in tuner.

SOUND QUALITY

Acoustically, the Discovery offers a bright, snappy tone with a healthy dose of mid-range push and decent definition on the bottom-end. It might not set the world alight or feature a wealth of harmonic overtones, but then few guitars in this price range do. What the Discovery does have in its favour is a great deal of versatility – the tone is plenty suited to plectrum and finger alike, and the fairly slim dimensions of the neck mean that the guitar should be comfy and playable for all kinds of guitarists.

The Discovery can sound a little harsh when you really thrash it around, but the tone overall is rather sweet and definitely full of character. It's not top drawer but I don't want that to sound like a criticism – this guitar sounds as good as you would expect just about any guitar in this price range to sound – it's

BREEDLOVE DISCOVERY CONCERT CE

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Breedlove
Model: Discovery Concert CE SB
Retail Price: £399
Body Size: Concert
Made In: Far East
Top: Solid Sitka Spruce
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Chrome
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Onboard Electronics: Fishman ISYS-T
Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP 16
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard bag

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A good-looking guitar with a great sound thanks to the spruce/mahogany combo
Cons: Not a lot to complain about – a great guitar for the price point
Overall: Breedlove proves that its instruments are top quality, whether built in the USA or in the Far East

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

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solid, dependable and versatile and there are hours of fun to be had.

The Fishman ISYS-T is a fairly common pickup/preamp combo on mid-range guitars so if you've tried any guitars in this kind of bracket before you're bound to have come across it. Tone shaping is limited but you do get a contour and phase switch for knocking any audible nasties out of the park, along with the usual volume control and a built-in tuner. It's a simple system designed for giving you a reliable platform through amplification, and tonally it's reasonably balanced and not overly artificial. Applying a few effects works very well and the additional tone controls on your amp or PA will help shape your tone beyond the basic offering. If you're tempted to record you may need to invest in a microphone, but that again is a pretty standard expectation with most electro-acoustic guitars anyway.

CONCLUSION

As I reached the end of my time with the Discovery Concert CE, I found myself sitting back, looking at it and just thinking to myself, "That is a damn good guitar". Like the Discovery itself, the statement is short and sweet but tells you everything you need to know. What we have here is a guitar that stands with the best

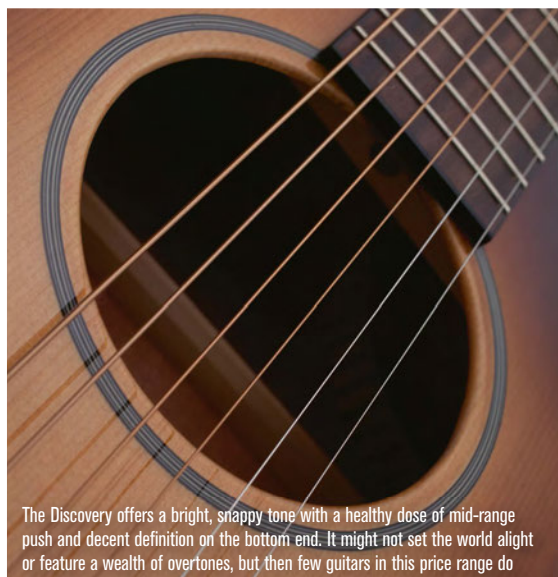
mid-range instruments offering truly excellent value for money, and it does it with a modern slant and style that is uniquely Breedlove. The slim neck, pleasing tones and electro versatility combine for a compelling little package that has the potential to provide many, many years of happiness and service. And where some of its rivals can look a little plain and workaday, Breedlove's superb styling and the eye-catching sunburst finish makes the Discovery stand out just that little bit more without being ostentatious or showy.



Where some of its rivals can look a little plain and workaday, Breedlove's superb styling and the eye-catching sunburst finish makes the Discovery stand out just that little bit more without being ostentatious or showy



The Fishman ISYS-T is a fairly common pickup/preamp combo on mid-range guitars. Tone shaping is limited but you do get a contour and phase switch, along with the usual volume control and a built-in tuner



The Discovery offers a bright, snappy tone with a healthy dose of mid-range push and decent definition on the bottom end. It might not set the world alight or feature a wealth of overtones, but then few guitars in this price range do

The bottom line is that for a simple guitar, the Discovery Concert hides a certain x-factor that just 'clicks' when you play it – and that's exactly what I'd recommend. Go out, grab one and play – I doubt you'll be able to put it down again.

Alun Lower

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GIBSON J-29 ROSEWOOD



The J-29 is a round-shouldered dreadnought with the traditional Gibson short scale of 628mm and is stage ready, fitted with an L R Baggs Element pickup. It has a Sitka spruce top with rosewood back and sides.

David Mead examines a round-shouldered dreadnought from Gibson . . .

When I was a mere strip of a lad with my nose firmly pressed up against music shop windows, I thought that Gibson was the only name to have on the headstock of a guitar. Now I've grown up – well, kinda – I'm a lot more broad-minded. But the name "Gibson" still has that sort of reverberant thrill for me from those years long past. So there was a great deal of glee on my part in anticipating the arrival of this guitar and I've got to say, I wasn't in the least bit disappointed...

BUILD QUALITY

I suppose it's fair to say that Gibson's acoustic range has always taken second place to their catalogue of celebrated electric instruments. The Les Paul, 335, SG and sundry other models have been coveted by hordes of players for around 60 years or so, but the acoustics have always been there too, quietly in the background and championed by players as diverse as David Gilmour, Greg Lake, The Everly Brothers and this month's cover star, James Bay.

The J-29 is a round-shouldered dreadnought with the traditional Gibson short scale of 628mm and is stage ready, fitted with an L R Baggs Element pickup. It has a Sitka spruce top with rosewood back and sides – not an unusual combination and one that you will see practically every month within these pages, but Gibson



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claim it to be new to the series. I'm told that the bracing underneath the soundboard is Gibson's 30s-style advanced X pattern, aimed at producing a combination of power with warmth. From what I can see of the interior, everything looks superbly neat and tidy, as you might expect from a prestigious builder.

The J-29's antique natural nitrocellulose finished body is bound with multi-ply black and white plastic which is mimicked by the soundhole rosette. There's a mock tortoise pickguard to round off the décor nicely, too.

On to the neck now and this is made from a single piece of mahogany with the customary fillets each side of the headstock to produce Gibson's accustomed trademark design. The neck is a reasonably deep C profile which feels substantial in the hand without being too clubby. Strangely, it's reminiscent of a couple of older Les Pauls that I've played in the past.

The tuners are the renowned Grovers with a 14:1 tuning ratio and the headstock fascia is black with the Gibson decal in gold at the top. The guitar's strings pass over a Tusq nut and hover over a



The J-29's antique natural nitrocellulose finished body is bound with multi-ply black and white plastic which is mimicked by the soundhole rosette. There's a mock tortoise pickguard to round off the décor nicely, too.

rosewood fingerboard with 19 frets and mother-of-pearl position markers. The action is what I'd describe as being medium to low – and it feels very comfortable under the fingers. It's rosewood once again for the bridge which is Gibson's traditional rectangle design with six white capped string pegs in line behind the Tusq saddle.

As you might expect, the finish is flawless and so the only thing left to do is to buckle up and take the J-29 for a test drive...

SOUND QUALITY

The thing about dreadnoughts is that you always know approximately what you're going to get from the very first strum. Famous for that full-bodied powerhouse sound, many of them are merely variations on a theme, but here we have Gibson's short scale to take into account and so things tend to feel and sound a mite different to, say, a Martin D-18. As it turns out, Gibson promised warmth and that's exactly what I've got – plus a good amount of power and volume, too. Played with the fingers, there are good amounts of everything you need: tone, good treble to bass balance and none of the boominess that you get from some dreads. But the J-29 really comes alive when played with a pick. As such, chords ring out strongly and single notes are capable of going from the politely restrained to turbo driven with a flick of the wrist.

Despite the general impression that short scale acoustics don't fare too well with drop tunings, I lowered the bass string to D and the J-29 took to it with no trouble at all and I think it could probably adapt well if I mined a little deeper, too.

As I have said, the J-29 is fitted with an L

GIBSON J-29 ROSEWOOD

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Gibson
Model: J-29 Rosewood
Retail Price: £1,599
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: USA
Top: Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Rosewood
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 19
Tuners: Grover
Nut Width: 43.8mm
Scale Length: 628.6mm
Onboard Electronics: L R Baggs Element
Strings Fitted: Gibson light gauge .012 - .053
Gig Bag/Case Included: Gibson hardshell case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: An adaptable, stage ready round shouldered dread from a top maker
Cons: It's possible that the short scale could deter some players
Overall: There's a whole wealth of warm, powerful sounds inside this instrument – it's well made, the right price and, heck – it's a Gibson!

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Gibson Guitars
www.gibson.com

R Baggs Element pickup which comprises an under saddle transducer with a single volume control hidden away inside the soundhole. This might sound like it's a little limiting, but in practice I found that I was able to get a perfectly acceptable amplified sound with my AER Compact 60's preamp controls set flat. The overall warmth of the instrument's acoustic nature came through with no trouble at all and by experimenting with the mid range control on the amp, everything from shimmering strums suitable for singer-songwriters, to more complex single note enhanced rhythm parts were easily attainable with the J-29. All the aforementioned add up to making this guitar something of a real all-rounder for anyone searching for a versatile stage ready instrument with bags of power and presence to add to their collection.

CONCLUSION

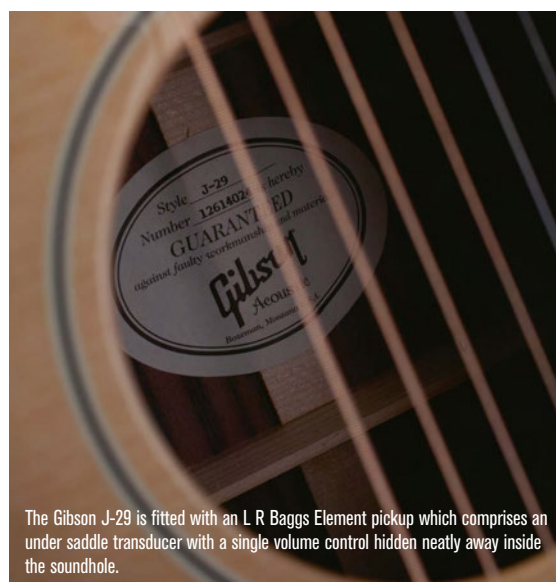
I've said before that I find dreadnoughts a little too large to handle comfortably, but this J-29 has charm enough to make me reconsider my thinking. Whereas I thought it was the body size that I found unmanageable, perhaps it was the scale length all along. Maybe the fact that I seemed to have felt immediately at home with this guitar is down to the fact that I have been spending rather a lot of time with a Les Paul

in my hands recently. As I said, the neck is not at all dissimilar. In any case, this Gibson acoustic was bags of fun to spend time with and I think it would suit a wide range of different players' styles. Then there's the price; it's a very competitive range with many bewilderingly tempting alternatives, but here you would be getting a superbly made instrument from a prestige maker that is ready, willing and able straight out of the case!

David Mead



Despite the general impression that short scale acoustics don't fare too well with drop tunings, I lowered the bass string to D and the J-29 took to it with no trouble at all and I think it could probably adapt well if I mined a little deeper.



The Gibson J-29 is fitted with an L R Baggs Element pickup which comprises an under saddle transducer with a single volume control hidden neatly away inside the soundhole.



The J-29 really comes alive when played with a pick. As such, chords ring out strongly and single notes are capable of going from the politely restrained to turbo driven with a flick of the wrist.

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6 String Acoustics



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13027 - Atkin AA Deluxe Custom OOO Figured Walnut
13022 - Atkin OO Am Special Parlour Guitar
13578 - BSG J10F Jumbo Electro Acoustic, Used
13367 - Brook Lyn 12 fret Handmade Guitar
13189 - Brook Tamar Medium Jumbo Handmade
13188 - Brook Taw OM Size Handmade Guitar
13366 - Brook Teign Dreadnought Handmade Guitar
4612 - Dave King Katrina OOO Model, Sunburst
4613 - Dave King Louise, Koa, Parlour, Natural
4770 - EKO Ranger Vintage Acoustic, Natural
13845 - Eko Legend Parlour Guitar, Sunburst
13544 - Eko Oliveira Pignoli Ltd Edition Acoustic
13847 - Eko Ranger 6 VR Fastlok, Vint. SB Gloss
13850 - Eko TRI 018 Honey Burst
13552 - Eko Vintage Ranger 6 in Black, Reissue
6975 - Fender CD60, Black
5096 - Fender CD60, Natural
5079 - Fender CD60, Sunburst
10245 - Fender CD60 Acoustic Guitar, Mahogany
6142 - Gibson Hummingbird Acoustic Guitar in Sturst
13213 - Gibson J185 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand
7090 - K Yairi New Yorker NY0021B, Natural
13614 - K Yairi YT1 Acoustic Guitar
7970 - LAG T300D Dreadnought, Satin Finish
12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar
9184 - Lakewood D18 Dreadnought, Natural
12649 - Lakewood M14 Grand Concert
12655 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert Acoustic Guitar
13386 - Landola D85 Dreadnought Acoustic, Used
8308 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Black
8310 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Natural
13790 - Martin 015 Westside Custom, Ltd Edition
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
6010 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
13824 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Nat, Used
13581 - Martin SWOMGT Orchestra Shape, Used
9342 - Northwood M80 12
11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG
11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
0000 - Vintage - 5 Models in stock now
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10932 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Redburst
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar
13691 - Yamaha FG411C, Vintage Sunburst, Used
13387 - Yamaha FG720S Yamaha FG720S
13308 - Yamaha FG720S Dreadnought Brown Sturst
8019 - YAMAHA FG730S Electro Acoustic Guitar

6 String Electro Acoustics



8035 - Breedlove AJ250/SF Plus Electro Acoustic
10285 - Breedlove Cascade OM/CRe Soft Cutaway
13866 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Sunburst
10287 - Breedlove Passport C250/COe Electro
10978 - Breedlove Passport C250/COe Electro, Nat
10294 - Breedlove Retro DiEre with LR Baggs
10976 - Breedlove Revival DSMe Electro Sunburst
10918 - Breedlove USA Gold DSRE
10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red
10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst
4769 - EKO Ranger EO Vintage Series, Black
13852 - Eko TRI 018 CW EO Honey Burst
10864 - Epiphone EL00 Pro Parlour Guitar
9543 - Faith F02BET Saitum Dreadnought Electro
12360 - Fender Avila Lavigne Newport
6943 - Fender CD60CE, Electro, Black
7024 - Fender CD60CE, Dreadnought, Electro, Nat
4335 - Fender CD60CE Dreadnought Electro, Sunburst
10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic
12671 - Fender Tony Alva Sonoran SCE
10150 - Gibson J35 Electro Acoustic Guitar, Nat
13169 - Gibson LC1 Cascade, V. Sunburst, Used
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
9552 - LAG T300AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9551 - LAG T300DE Electro Acoustic Guitar
12666 - Lakewood A14 CP
9186 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic, Natural
12674 - Lakewood J14C Baritone Jumbo Electro
12672 - Lakewood J14CP Jumbo Electro

6 String Electro Acoustics



12658 - Lakewood M14 CP
12678 - Lakewood M18CP Grand Concert Electro
12679 - Lakewood Sungha Jung Signature Electro
13732 - Larnivee L09 Rosewood Artist, Used
5407 - Levin LS500CE, Small Electro, Blue
10933 - Levin SW203CETU Electro Acoustic Sturst
13717 - Maestro Raffles AB-CSBA Guitar
13714 - Maestro Raffles FM-CSBA Custom Jumbo
12696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo Electro
12790 - Maestro Raffles MDT Small Jumbo Electro
12789 - Maestro Raffles Monkey Pod Electro
13713 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSBA Custom Jumbo
12701 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12596 - Maestro Rosetta with fitted LR Baggs
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12791 - Maestro Rosetta SR Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
12594 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa K-CSB-K Koa Jumbo Electro
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSBA Custom Jumbo
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13711 - Maestro Singa O-CSB Custom Medium Jumbo
13718 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13715 - Maestro Victoria IR OOO with LR Baggs
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13208 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13055 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12783 - Maestro Victoria MR OOO with LR Baggs
12225 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro Acoustic
13856 - Martin Ed Sheeran X Signature Ed Electro
10904 - Martin OMC16GTE Cutaway Electro Acoustic
13674 - Martin OMXAE Electro Acoustic, Black
12439 - Northwood Custom Koa 80D Electro
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrie 80 Series Dnought
6403 - Northwood R80, OM Electro, Natural
11246 - Northwood R80-OO Electro Acoustic Guitar
12472 - Ovation 6868 Elite Standard Secondhand
10031 - Ovation Pro Elite 2078AX
13652 - PRS SE A10E Angelus, Tortoise Shell
10095 - RainSong BJ-JM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - RainSong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
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13459 - Tanglewood TW115 SSCE
13458 - Tanglewood TW130 SMCE Electro Acoustic
4188 - Tanglewood TW40 DANE Dreadnought Electro
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8328 - Tanglewood TW55VS Super Jumbo, VS
12304 - Tanglewood TW73 VSE
13288 - Tanglewood TWUPE Parlour Electro
13485 - Taylor 515E Electro Acoustic, Used
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
9535 - Walden CG570CE Electro Acoustic Guitar
10931 - Westcoast SW201 VT Electro, Sunburst
10307 - Westcoast SW201VT Electro Acoustic Black
8306 - Westcoast SW201-VT Electro Acoustic, Nat
13233 - Yamaha AC3M Electro Acoustic, Secondhand
13687 - Yamaha AC3R, Natural
8263 - Yamaha APX500 III Electro Acoustic, Nat
8020 - Yamaha CPX700, Tinted Finish
9191 - Yamaha FG730SC Electro Acoustic, Nat
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8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical
6777 - Mendieta Estudio S Classical
8240 - Mendieta Estudio T Classical Guitar
12238 - Mendieta Estudio VCE Electro Classical
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
6335 - Ramirez 2E Classical Guitar
6028 - Ramirez 4E Classical Guitar
5251 - Ramirez AE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model Classical
6337 - Ramirez R1 Classical Guitar
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
8357 - Ramirez R4 Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
5828 - Roberto 4/4 Classical Guitar
6442 - Roberto C1 Classical Guitar With Bag
6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar
12302 - Tanglewood TCMR1 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red

Ukuleles



12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ1 Banjo Ukulele
8209 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
8208 - Delta Blue DUB2F Ukulele Banjo
13616 - Fender Pihalea Soprano Ukulele
9080 - Fender UJUK Soprano Ukulele
13066 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Acacia
13067 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Walnut
12338 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele Inc Gigbag
12800 - Kala KA-BNUBK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
12799 - Kala KA-BNUBK-S Soprano Banjo Ukulele
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
4722 - Kala U-Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
12285 - Lag U100C Concert Ukulele
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12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
7101 - Ohana BK35 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BK35E Bass Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK10S Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
13633 - Ohana CK15BK Concert Ukulele, Black
13634 - Ohana CK15BL Concert Ukulele, Blue
13635 - Ohana CK15GN Concert Ukulele, Green
13632 - Ohana CK15MR Concert Ukulele, Garnet Red
12607 - Ohana CK15W Concert Ukulele
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
9050 - Ohana CK200C Concert Uke
4466 - Ohana CK20S Concert Ukulele
13638 - Ohana CK22 Concert Ukulele
13639 - Ohana CK22Z Concert Ukulele, Zebrawood
13643 - Ohana CK23 Concert Ukulele
8520 - Ohana CK35CE Electro Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8512 - Ohana CK50WG Concert Ukulele
13627 - Ohana KXS15E Slimline Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana PK25G Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
13637 - Ohana SK10GN Soprano Uke, Matte Green
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
13636 - Ohana SK10WV Soprano Uke, Matte Yellow
13644 - Ohana SK12 Soprano Ukulele
7099 - Ohana SK15BL Soprano Ukulele in Black
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
13626 - Ohana SK22 Soprano Ukulele
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
13642 - Ohana SK23 Soprano Ukulele
4715 - Ohana SK25G Solid Mahogany Gloss
9529 - Ohana SK50MG Soprano Ukulele
7108 - Ohana SK70MG Soprano Ukulele
7106 - Ohana SK75 Soprano Ukulele
7107 - Ohana SK75R Soprano Ukulele
12608 - Ohana SKS15E Slim Electro Soprano Uke
4708 - Ohana TK10 Tenor Ukulele
4706 - Ohana TK35G Tenor Ukulele
12611 - Ohana TK38 Tenor Ukulele
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag
13310 - Ohana Baritone Uke Gig Bag
5009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo
12522 - Recording King RU998 Resonator Ukulele
12740 - ResoVile Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
9639 - Slagg USX SPA Soprano Uke Spalted Maple
10426 - Uluru III Tenor Ukulele
12189 - Uluru Koa I Concert Ukulele
10425 - Uluru II Concert Ukulele
13033 - Vox Ukelectric 33 Ukulele, Blackburst

12 Strings



13865 - Breedlove Pursuit 12 String Acoustic
12227 - Eko 12 String Guitar, Secondhand
13846 - Eko Ranger 12 VR Fastlok, Vint. SB Gloss
13553 - Eko Vintage Ranger 12 in Black, Reissue
9553 - Lag T200D12 12 String Acoustic Guitar
8322 - Levin SW206CETU 12 Strg Ele/Acoustic Gtr
9816 - RainSong JM3000 Classic Series Electro
9817 - RainSong WS3000 Classic Series Electro
10991 - Tanglewood TRD12 Lefty 12 Acoustic, Nat
13475 - Tanglewood TW145 12 SS CE
12706 - Washburn D42S 12 12 String Guitar

Mandolin Family



8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
8824 - Ashbury AM-370 Mandolin
13527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001
12568 - Fender FM63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst
12540 - Fender FM63SE Electro Acoustic Mandolin
10191 - Fender Mando-Strat Electric Mandolin
4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus E Electro, Natural
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4563 - Jimmy Moon Octave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst
8316 - Westcoast M50E Electro Mandolin

Acoustic Amplification



5709 - AER AG8 Powered 60w Extension Monitor
5706 - AER Acousticube III - 120w, 1x8"
5712 - AER Alpha - 40W, 1x8"
5193 - AER Alpha Plus - 50W, 1x8"
5705 - AER Basic Performer Acoustic Bass Amp
5704 - AER Basscube 550W Acoustic Bass Amp
0000 - AER Compact Series - 5 models in stock now
9028 - AER Domino 3 200w Watt Acoustic Amp
0000 - Acus One - 8 models in stock now
13830 - Acus One Ten, Black
13831 - Acus One Ten, Wood Finish
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
9166 - Loudbox Artist
4548 - Fishman Loudbox Mini - 60W, 1x6.5"
5286 - Fishman SA220 - 220w, 6x4"
9711 - Laney LA12C Acoustic Amp Combo
13282 - Markbass AC101 Acoustic Combo
6770 - Marshall AS1000 - 50W+50W, 2x8"
6771 - Marshall AS500 - 50W, 2x8"
4573 - Peavey Ecosound E20 - 20W, 1x8"
4572 - Peavey Ecosound E208 - 20W, 2x8"
0000 - Roland - 7 models in stock now
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
8108 - Tanglewood T6 60W
13471 - Tanglewood TW15 Bass Sub
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

Travel Guitars



13867 - Breedlove Passport Traveler E, w/Gigbag
13550 - Eko Evo Mini EO Travel Guitar
13848 - Eko Tri Mini Honey Burst 3/4 Acoustic
13849 - Eko Tri Mini Natural 3/4 Acoustic
13217 - Maestro IR3 CSB A Meridian Travel Guitar
5214 - Martin & Co LXM Little Martin, Natural
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
13856 - Martin Ed Sheeran X Signature Ed Electro
13324 - Martin LX Red Little Martin
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural

GATOR CASES G-PG CLASSIC ULTIMATE GIG BAG

Think all gig bags are created equal? **Alun Lower** finds out whether Gator Cases are the second coming or simply extra padding...

I've always found it quite amazing, and even a little worrying, how so many guitarists pay so little attention to their guitar case. Most of us know we need to replace the flimsy, moth-ridden potato sacks that many budget guitars are supplied in, but I've lost count of how many times I've been checking in at an airport and seen some hapless guitarist send their pride and joy down the baggage tunnel in a standard hardcase. It makes me cringe inside every time I see it but all I can do is make a silent prayer for our mutual six-stringed friend.

If that wasn't enough, let me tell you another story. If there are any Wishbone Ash fans out there, you may well have seen Andy Powell wielding a gorgeous, custom-made V-style guitar with the most amazing figured burl top you've ever seen. Well, back in my day working for an electric guitar mag I was lucky enough to be writing a feature on this very guitar. After photography and a bit of testing it was sent back to the luthier in the exact packaging I had received it in – a standard hardcase (v-shaped of course), a cardboard box and as much bubble wrap as could fit into the gaps (which was not a lot, I can tell you). A day later I receive a call from the devastated luthier, whose crowning glory now featured a crack all the way up one of the wings. Despite several phone calls and arguments with the courier it was clear they weren't going to pay out a single penny. And why? Because the packaging wasn't deemed sufficient to insure the guitar.



Ever since that day, I've insisted to every guitarist I've ever spoken to that they simply have to invest in a decent case or gig bag, and often I've had surprised responses from those who think a gig bag can't possibly be tough enough to look after a delicate instrument as well or better than a hard case. Well, companies like Gator Cases are more than capable of proving you wrong, and the G-PG Classic is the proof. The case makes a great first impression by arriving with an elasticated rain cover, something I've personally not seen supplied with any other guitar case in the past.

On the underside of the case, two well-padded backpack-style straps offer a very



GATOR CASES G-PG-CLASSIC ULTIMATE GIG BAG**NEED TO KNOW****Manufacturer:** Gator Cases**Model:** G-PG-Classic Ultimate**Retail Price:** £110**Body Height (cm):** 10.79**Body Length (cm):** 60.94**Colour:** Black and Red**Handles:** Padded Nylon Handle & Backpack Straps**Lower Bout Width (cm):** 39.4**Middle Bout Width (cm):** 26**Overall length (cm):** 106.8**Upper Bout Width (cm):** 29.8**Weight (kg):** 3.6**Latches:** Zipper**External Height (cm):** 12.5**External Length (cm):** 116.8**External Width (cm):** 34.3**ACOUSTIC RATING****Build Quality:** ★★★★★**Sound Quality:** ★★★★★**Value for Money:** ★★★★★**5 Stars:** Superb, almost faultless.**4 Stars:** Excellent, hard to beat.**3 Stars:** Good, covers all bases well.**2 or 1 Stars:** Below average, poor.**CONTACT DETAILS:**

Freestyle Music / Gator Cases

www.freestylmusic.co.uk



comfortable and snug fit on your shoulders. There are also two carabiner clips at the top of these straps – you know, just in case you find yourself busking halfway up Mt. Everest. In all seriousness, these clips actually prove to be very useful anchor points if you know your case is in genuine danger of falling, or even sliding about in the boot of your car/van/tour bus/private jet (delete as appropriate). It might be something you never use but when it comes to protecting your guitar, I'd say it's always good to have these little extras.


You're also not short of pockets with the G-PG, with clever compartments and zipped flaps worked into just about every spare inch of material. Some of the more unique compartments are designed to hold sheet music, tidy your cables, hold effects pedals, tuners – you name it, chances are it'll fit somewhere in this case. And as with practically all bags and backpacks nowadays, it even has a dedicated compartment for your tablet. The pockets are also helpfully lined with a bright red interior designed to increase visibility – anyone who's tried to find an Allen key at the bottom of a black-lined pocket on stage will know just how much of a pain that can be!

If the exterior was impressive enough, opening the case itself to reveal the interior has even more of an impact. We all joke about wrapping our guitars in cotton wool, but Gator has gone one step further by lining the G-PG with what at first glance seems like the mercilessly harvested coats of a dozen Andrex puppies. It is gloriously soft, so much so that I find myself no wishing Gator made a human-sized case that I could substitute for my bed. The padded walls at the sides and under the neck are also reinforced and tough without being too rigid – just perfect for giving your guitar a bit of bounce in the event of a heart-stopping drop. This is one of the key areas where gig bags can be more useful than a hard case – check out Gator's YouTube videos if you don't believe me. There's also an extra cushion at the bottom of the case to give extra support to the lower bout of the guitar. This is removable if you prefer, and might be necessary if you have a bigger guitar – I'd suggest checking the dimensions on Gator's website to be extra sure before buying.

CONCLUSION

After being impressed by deluxe gig bags from other companies for many years, my first experience with a Gator case has been an overwhelmingly positive one. It's positively packed full of clever features and handy hideaways for all your gadgets, and the plush interior provides more comfort and protection than your average five-star hotel, let alone a guitar case. When you consider the relative fragility of our beloved guitars, investing in a quality case makes sense – and the Gator G-PG simply has to be among the best you can buy.

Alun Lower



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AVIAN FAN FRET SONGBIRD AND SKYLARK

David Mead peruses a dynamic duo of fan fretters from the esteemed Avian range



APP EXTRA
PRESS PLAY TO
HEAR THESE IN ACTION

We first met the Avian range of acoustics around the middle of last year when I sat down to review a trio comprising the Skylark, Dove and Songbird models. In essence, these are designer instruments that are manufactured in China under very stringent quality control, meaning that purchasers can access boutique style guitars at very reasonable prices. I remember being surprised and delighted by the quality on offer in the range, but now it's time for something a little different because two of the Avians have a new trick up their sleeves in the form of fan fret variations.

If you're at all unfamiliar with the fan fret – or “multi-scale” – concept, I'll attempt to clarify matters in the briefest way possible. Far from being a new gimmick among luthiers, the fan fret idea has been around for hundreds of years. It's an attempt to aid intonation by offering a slightly different scale length for each string, meaning that the player has all the benefits of rich, tuneful basses and sweet trebles without the compromise usually necessary with a standard fretting arrangement. Players like Andy McKee and Tony McManus are enthusiastic about their own fan fret instruments, declaring that drop tunings in particular are more stable from a intonational perspective. I'll admit up front that I'm a fan fret novice; I had never played one until these two Avians arrived on my doorstep and so we'll be embarking on this voyage of discovery together right from the start!

AVIAN SONGBIRD FAN FRET

We'll begin this adventure by looking at the Michael Bashkin designed Songbird. When I looked at its non fan fret stablemate a year or so ago I noted at the time that it was a very flexible instrument that adapted well to pretty much any playing style. I was particularly taken with its sweet, airy and focused sound. This, of course, augers well for the new model and I'm curious to find out how the different fretting strategy has enhanced things...

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

When I last laid eyes on the Songbird, there was a question about its body shape, Avian calling it a “medium jumbo” and my own opinion that it was closer to an OM. Looking at it again now, I can see where the “jumbo” definition originates in that the lower bout does have that slightly ballooned quality to it that marks that particular body style. In any case, the Songbird's Sitka spruce top looks very fine indeed, with a broken circle rosette, the shallow demi-cutaway and comfort bevel. As far as the cutaway is concerned, fashioning it like this means that the body of the instrument retains much of

The Songbird's back and sides are mahogany which, like the front face of the instrument, has been neatly bound at the edges with rosewood. All the lines here are crisp and clean in that you can sense the presence of a designer's flourish

its cubic capacity whilst still giving the player access to the top of the fretboard. It's a clever and effective device which is unusual on instruments in this price range. The bevel's presence speaks for itself – if you've ever found that prolonged playing produces discomfort in your right arm from the pressure of the guitar's upper bout, your problems could be cured with this simple little manoeuvre.

The Songbird's back and sides are mahogany which, like the front face of the instrument, has been neatly bound at the edges with rosewood. All the lines here are crisp and clean in that you can sense the presence of a designer's flourish, but not overly so.

On to the neck now and whereas you might think that the fan fret concept would imply some changes to the overall structure here, you'd be wrong. From the back, the Songbird looks absolutely the same as a regular guitar with mahogany split by a maple stripe, the long lollipop style headstock complete with six Avian embossed tuners.

From the front, of course, things do look a little different! Visually it takes some getting used to and it does make me wonder by how much I'm going to have to modify my playing style in order to adapt to the slanting frets.

We'll find out in a little while, but for now, the rosewood fingerboard has 20 fanned frets with an offset bone nut mirrored by the bridge and string saddle at the body end. So, having addressed the shock of the new, let's see how it sounds.

AVIAN SONGBIRD

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Avian
Model: Songbird Fan Fret
Retail Price: £1199
Body Size: Medium Jumbo
Made In: China
Top: Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Neck: Mahogany/maple stripe
Fingerboard: Indian rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Avian sealed back
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 635mm - 654.05mm
Onboard Electronics: B-Band Crescent II Dual Source
Strings Fitted: Elixir .012s
Left Handers: Yes
Gig Bag/Case Included: Moulded hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

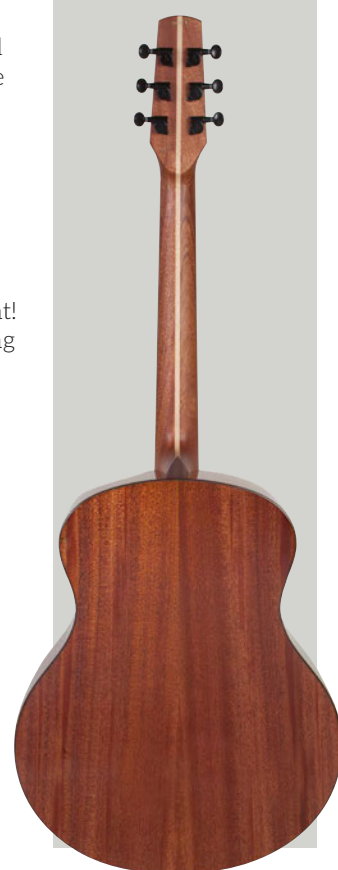
Pros: Designer flourish and some great sounds, ideal for drop tuning
Cons: Nothing to make a fuss about!
Overall: A great instrument – a very good quality build with considerable tonal depth

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Exclusively available via The North American Guitar
www.thenorthamericanguitar.com



AVIAN SKYLARK NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Avian
Model: Skylark Fan Fret
Retail Price: £1199
Body Size: Medium Jumbo
Made In: China
Top: Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Indian rosewood
Neck: Mahogany/maple stripe
Fingerboard: Indian rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Avian sealed back
Nut Width: 43mm
Scale Length: 635mm - 654.05mm
Onboard Electronics: B-Band A2.2
 Dual Source
Strings Fitted: Elixir .012s
Left Handers: Yes
Gig Bag/Case Included: Moulded
 hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Adventurous fingerstylists will love this for its tone and flexibility
Cons: Preamp controls maybe slightly awkward to reach
Overall: All the benefits of fan fretting delivered at a remarkable price point

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Exclusively available via The North American Guitar
www.thenorthamericanguitar.com
www.audenguitars.com



These are designer instruments that are manufactured in China under very stringent quality control, meaning that purchasers can access boutique style guitars at very reasonable prices.



It has the look of a cutaway OM, even if the vital statistics don't quite match up, and its uncluttered clean lines certainly do it justice on the aesthetic front

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

It's the honest truth that within a few minutes of picking the Songbird up to play it, I had completely forgotten that the fretting was any different. From a player's perspective, you don't really see it and what the eye can't see, the fingers don't worry about. This was a surprise, as I suspected that the transition period would be at least mildly troublesome. Of course, standard tuning isn't really what this guitar is all about and so I placed a fair amount of emphasis on drop tunings. I began with DADGAD, which has almost become my home turf, and found that the Songbird's basses were strident and well rounded, while the trebles remained sweet and pure. But I wasn't going to let things rest there. One of my pieces involves dropping the bass string to C which means that tuning has to be absolutely spot on otherwise things can go very badly awry. On the Songbird this was not anywhere near being an issue; I merely tuned the bass down to C and the string tracked the bass throughout the piece with no infidelities at all. So it's full marks for fan fretting as a concept and to the Songbird, too, as tonally it was well up to the mark.

There is a B-Band Crescent Dual Source pickup fitted to the guitar which enjoys the benefits of both an under saddle transducer

and a soundboard sensor all overseen by an 800Hz crossover. The controls allow the player to blend the two sources to achieve a perfect mix of bass and treble and I must say that the soundhole-mounted controls didn't give me any trouble at all and I soon had the guitar set up and sounding great. Electronically, the bass is good without being domineering and the trebles retain their dulcet personality, too. So both amplified and unplugged, the Songbird certainly sings sweetly.

AVIAN SKYLARK FAN FRET

All aboard the Skylark now and this Harry Fleishman designed instrument caused quite a stir when I reviewed its straight fretted counterpart last year. Decidedly more pot-bellied than the Songbird I opined that once you get over the sleek, slightly left field looks, there's a lot of worthy attributes to be explored and enjoyed. I'm expecting the fan fret version to deliver a few more surprises...

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

I guess that "medium jumbo" doesn't really convey too much in terms of body dimensions and so I'll bare all with a ruler. The Skylark's upper bout is 287mm and the lower is 380mm with an average depth (i.e. at the waist) of 105mm. Part of the design initiative on the "straight" Skylark is that the lower bout is a perfect circle with the bridge in the centre in order to distribute





The top is Sitka spruce with neatly bound edges. The eye is immediately drawn to the offset semi-triangular soundhole. The Skylark's back and sides are Indian Rosewood with plenty of the dark brown stripy grain associated with this particular tonewood. The bevel and scooped cutaway both share the same wood, too, giving the guitar a dark, austere look overall.



Both guitars make an excellent introduction to the fan fret concept and at this kind of price, each would be a relatively non-risky investment to make. Good design with tip-top manufacturing make this brand definitely one to watch!

vibration evenly over the soundboard. Here, of course, the bridge is offset and the presence of the bevel deceives the eye as to whether the same is true at least in principle here. I'm thinking that it is, though!

As before, the Skylark's top is Sitka spruce with neatly bound edges. Naturally the eye is immediately drawn to the offset semi-triangular soundhole and this is something that you're either aesthetically drawn to or not. Lovers of the near perfect symmetry on a standard acoustic might not take to it, but I like it.

The Skylark's back and sides are Indian Rosewood with plenty of the dark brown stripy grain associated with this particular tonewood. The bevel and scooped cutaway both share the same wood, too, giving the guitar a dark, austere look overall.

The neck is mahogany with a maple stripe down the centre, exactly as before with a wide and fairly thin C profile. I might have even detected a very soft V too, but it's difficult to be sure.

There are Avian tuners on the headstock with a rosewood veneer to the front and the attractive company logo on the top. Once again, the fretboard is Indian rosewood and both the slanted nut and string saddle are made from bone.

As far as the pickup is concerned, I wondered why this model was fitted with a different B-Band model to its partner. The answer is that the controls for the Crescent II Dual Source simply wouldn't fit the Skylark's soundhole and so here Avian have opted for the B-Band A2.2 instead. With this pick-up the controls are a far more compact two thumbwheels that sit quite nicely at the soundhole's lower side. I'm not sure that this is optimum for use on stage as it's possibly further back than you'd expect, but most players would probably get used to it quite quickly.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

When I reviewed the Avians last year I thought that the necks on these guitars were very probably

all made together from the same exact dimensions, but strangely I found that swapping a capo from the Songbird to the Skylark involved a little compensation and so they must be slightly different in depth. Interesting; obviously quality control here is as tight as I had been led to believe!

In any case, last time I met the Skylark I was quite taken with its tonal attributes and the fan fret version tells a very similar story. To my ears the rosewood back and sides have added an airy sustain to the sound picture and the trebles are possibly even more tightly focused, too. In terms of bass, there's certainly enough and it's quite crisp, without any noticeable bulges in the midrange.

I applied the same drop tuning tests to both guitars and came up with very similar results. There is definitely an improved amount of tracking with even quite subterranean drop tunings, adding up to an adventurous fingerstylist's dream come true.

Through an amplifier, the B-Band A2.2 is a really easy drive with just two controls to work with: one for volume, the other to blend the under saddle with the sensor. As such, I was up and running in no time and interestingly I think this guitar is a bit louder than its counterpart – certainly that was what I found by AB-ing the two, anyway. In any case, it was easy to find the right blend and just play – I'm still not quite sure about where the controls have been positioned, though.

CONCLUSION

If I was asked to choose, I might go for the rosewood backed Skylark, although my curiosity would insist on me trying the rosewood option on the Songbird, too. Both guitars make an excellent introduction to the fan fret concept and at this kind of price, each would be a relatively non-risky investment to make. Good design with tip-top manufacturing make this brand definitely one to watch!

David Mead



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www.DanielHo.com

ASHBURY MANDOLIN & IRISH BOUZOUKI



The four-a-side chrome strip tuners are open backed with some nice engraving in the metal, adding a touch of class to this end of the mandolin. Flipping it over, we find a veneer to the headstock.

The Ashbury range of instruments includes both classical and acoustic guitars, but they also serve the Celtic music market by providing mandolas, citterns, mandolins and bouzoukis. Everything you need, in fact, to start your own folk revival! We're looking at two instruments from the Ashbury catalogue, both of which are aimed at the entry level player and priced in the sub-£300 spectrum. I am told that the site of manufacture is a boutique facility in Vietnam and the promise is that the instruments are made from the best materials to provide optimum performance at a reasonable cost.

ASHBURY AM-140 MANDOLIN

This is a traditional flattop and back mandolin that many might associate with the range that emanated from Martin back in the early 20th century. Other variations include the Gibson archtop A and F styles and if you're really hardcore, then a solid body electric version might just be what you need!

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

Like the guitar, the mandolin can trace its ancestry back to the lute family. Originally bowl-backed, the modern instrument opts more for the easier to manufacture flat back and has featured not only in folk and bluegrass music but sometimes in rock bands like Led Zeppelin, as well as excellent folk fusion units like The Imagined Village and Afro Celt Sound System.

The AM-140 looks very sleek and neat at first sight and closer inspection reveals a solid cedar top with a circular soundhole and a mother of pearl rosette. What's visible to me inside the instrument certainly looks very neat and tidy, too. The mandolin's back and sides are



Chords are boisterous and single notes clear and articulate. If this mandolin is aimed at the entry and intermediate levels I can see it being a real winner!



The AM-140 looks very sleek and neat at first sight and closer inspection reveals a solid cedar top with a circular soundhole and a mother of pearl rosette. What's visible to me inside the instrument certainly looks very neat and tidy, too.

made from sapele – unsurprisingly the tonewoods in use here are very similar to those found on guitars and so moving up towards the top of the range, you're likely to find Indian rosewood, walnut or even something more exotic. It's sapele once again for the AM-140's neck although the grain texture and colouring is very different to what's in evidence on the body.

The four-a-side chrome strip tuners are open backed with some nice engraving in the metal, adding a touch of class to this end of the mandolin. Flipping it over, we find a veneer to the headstock which has pitted a little around the tuner capstans in places which might have happened when the ferrules were inserted into the wood.

The 30mm nut is made from buffalo bone and looks well cut – certainly the action is very comfortable on the lower frets. It's rosewood for the fretboard with 19 nicely polished, well seated frets and mother of pearl position markers. The compensated string saddle is also made from buffalo bone and sits in the midst of a rosewood bridge, the strings trailing to the end of the instrument where they are damped with a piece of white rubber before being fastened into the tailpiece.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The string gauges on the AM-140 are (low to high) .040, .026, .016 and .012 and the accepted tuning is G D A E, which is the low four strings of a guitar reversed. Many studio guitarists in the

1960s used to up their earning capacity by telling record producers and bookers that they could play mandolin as well and when they were booked they would tune to the mandolin to simulate the guitar's top four strings – D, G, B and E – and use modified guitar chords for the session. Cunning stuff, you have to admit, and a recourse that is still open to any guitarist wishing for an easy path into the folk world!

In any case, I stuck with the recommended tuning and the AM-140 proved to be an easy instrument to navigate. Crystal clear highs and very good levels of sustain backed up by some good opacity and separation between the notes. Chords are boisterous and single notes clear and articulate. If this mandolin is aimed at the entry and intermediate levels I can see it being a real winner!

ASHBURY STYLE A IRISH BOUZOUKI

When I first encountered a bouzouki being played in an Irish band – the highly underrated Dervish – I did pause to wonder how a Turkish instrument ended up being absorbed into the traditional music of a country so far away. A little research has revealed that, like the mandolin, Bouzoukis evolved from the lute, modern makers now producing them with flat backs as opposed to the original bowl. Similar in style to the octave mandola except for the longer scale, the modern bouzouki was introduced into Irish music in the 1960s by bands like Sweeney's Men and Planxty. So now we know...

ASHBURY AM-140

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Ashbury
Model: AM-140
Retail Price: £299
Made In: Vietnam
Top: Cedar
Back and Sides: Sapele
Neck: Sapele
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 19
Tuners: Open back 4-a-side
Nut Width: 30mm
Scale Length: 360mm
Strings Fitted: .012 - .040
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A good playing experience – excellent for the beginner to intermediate level

Cons: A few blemishes on the headstock veneer

Overall: Well constructed, nice sounding instrument with a great deal going for it

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.

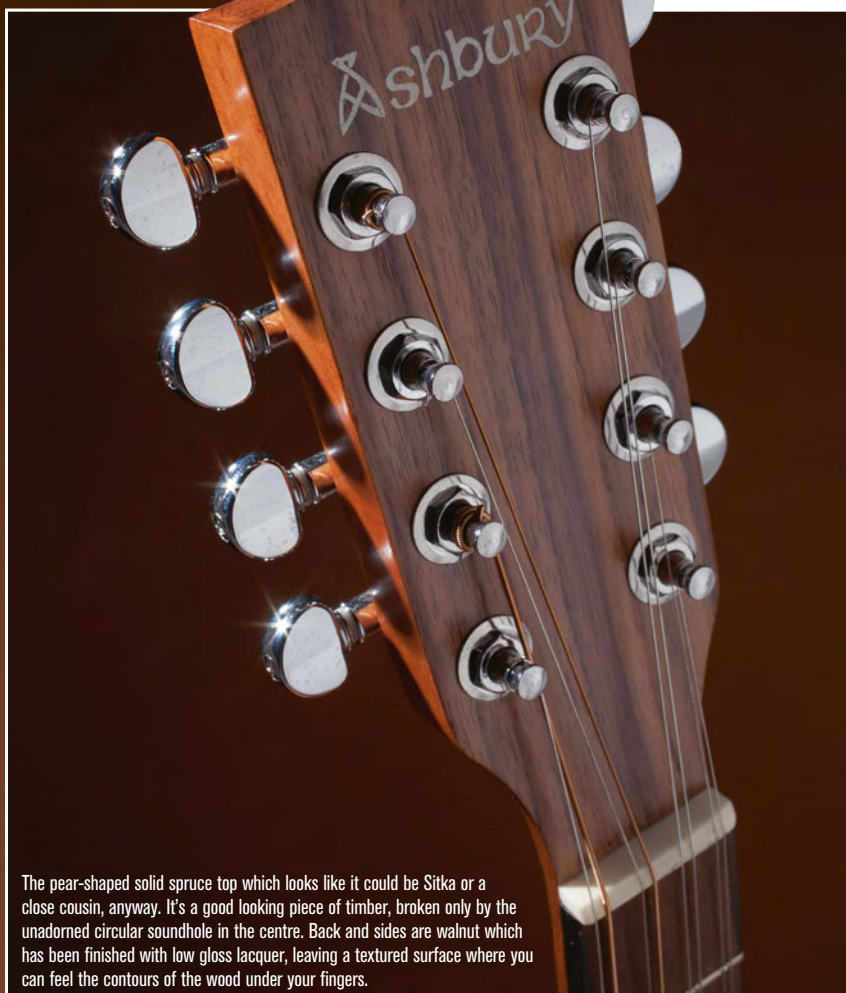
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.

3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.

2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Gremlin Music
www.gremlinmusic.co.uk



The pear-shaped solid spruce top which looks like it could be Sitka or a close cousin, anyway. It's a good looking piece of timber, broken only by the unadorned circular soundhole in the centre. Back and sides are walnut which has been finished with low gloss lacquer, leaving a textured surface where you can feel the contours of the wood under your fingers.

BUILD QUALITY AND FEATURES

Another thing about the bouzouki that's worth noting before we continue is the range of available tunings for the instrument. Out of all of them, I've opted to stick to the Irish traditional G, D, A, D bass to treble - or the lower strings of DADGAD tuning reversed. I feel almost at home!

Ashbury have cited this model as an entry level to intermediate instrument and it has been priced accordingly. A top of the range hand built bouzouki would set you back £2000 or more depending on woods, etc and so that places the £249 price tag here a little more in context.

We'll start off with the pear-shaped solid spruce top of the bouzouki which looks like it could be Sitka or a close cousin, anyway. It's a good looking piece of timber, broken only by the unadorned circular soundhole in the centre. Back and sides are walnut which has been finished with low gloss lacquer, leaving a textured surface where you can feel the contours of the wood under your fingers.

The neck is sapele, far more familiar in appearance than on the mandolin, with a honeyed colour and a grain similar to that of mahogany. There are eight Grover tuners on the headstock for tuning the four courses - the lower two strings in octave pairs and the top two in unison similar to a 12-string guitar.

Both the string saddle and nut have been fashioned from bone and the fretboard is made from rosewood, as is the bridge.

ASHBURY BOUZOUKI

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Ashbury
Model: Style A Irish Bouzouki
Retail Price: £249
Made In: Vietnam
Top: Spruce
Back and Sides: Walnut
Neck: Sapele
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 22
Tuners: Grover
Nut Width: 36mm
Scale Length: 665mm
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A great entry level instrument for the bouzouki curious

Cons: Fret ends a little sharp in places

Overall: Anyone who feels drawn towards Irish traditional music should add the Ashbury to their wish list!

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.

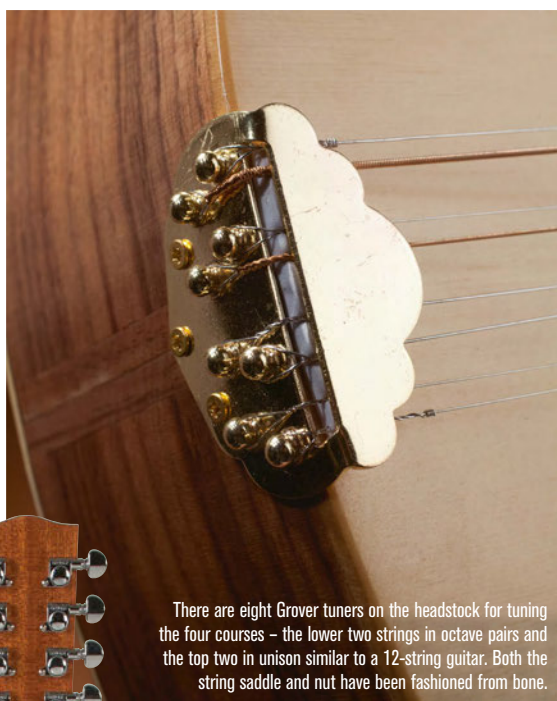
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.

3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.

2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Gremlin Music
www.gremlinmusic.co.uk



There are eight Grover tuners on the headstock for tuning the four courses – the lower two strings in octave pairs and the top two in unison similar to a 12-string guitar. Both the string saddle and nut have been fashioned from bone.

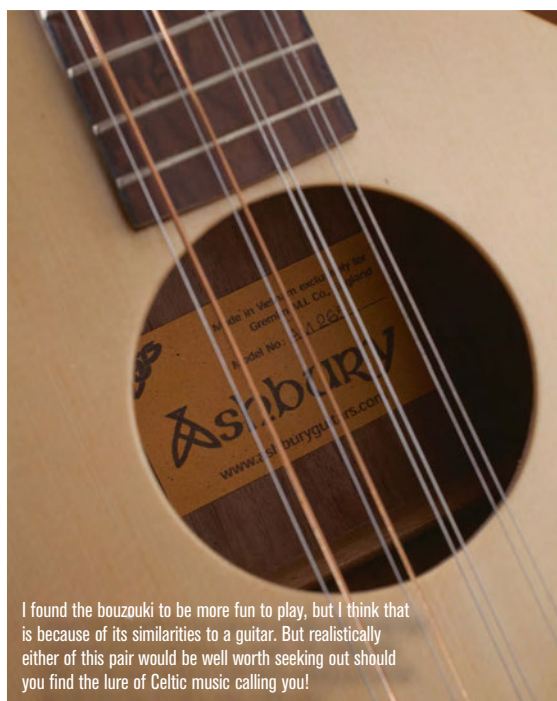
SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The bouzouki's neck feels substantial in the hand, but not in an ungainly way and the scale length is very similar to a guitar's and so the fret positions felt familiar right from the start. I mention this in case anyone is thinking of making a sideways step into bouzouki playing as it's helpful to have as many common denominators as you can get. My hand did detect a few sharpish fret ends which would need sorting, though.

The sound is very sweet and full, the octave courses thickening things up nicely. Bouzoukis are used in Irish music more as an accompanying instrument and are traditionally played using a pick and so this is the route I took. The similarities to DADGAD tuning helped out a lot here because it didn't take me too long to find enough chords to make a reasonable stab at playing some Irish-flavoured accompaniment. As such, it provided bags of fun; it's a really nice sound which is full of sparkle – exactly what you want for a rhythm instrument. I think it wouldn't take me too long to orientate myself to the thinner fretboard and new tuning – and so, seeing as Ashbury rate this model as an ideal entry level instrument, I can say, "job done"!

CONCLUSION

As you will have gathered by now, I'm certainly no expert in playing either of these instruments. But seeing as both are aimed pretty much at the beginner I'm quite possibly the ideal choice



I found the bouzouki to be more fun to play, but I think that is because of its similarities to a guitar. But realistically either of this pair would be well worth seeking out should you find the lure of Celtic music calling you!



The similarities to DADGAD tuning helped out a lot here because it didn't take me too long to find enough chords to make a reasonable stab at playing some Irish-flavoured accompaniment. As such, it provided bags of fun.

to audition both. As it turns out, the mandolin and the bouzouki are well made and really pleasant on the ear and would provide anyone with an easy ride into exploring a new instrument should they wish to branch out. Personally I found the bouzouki to be more fun to play, but I think that is because of its similarities to a guitar more than anything. But realistically either of this pair would be well worth seeking out should you find the lure of Celtic music calling you!

David Mead

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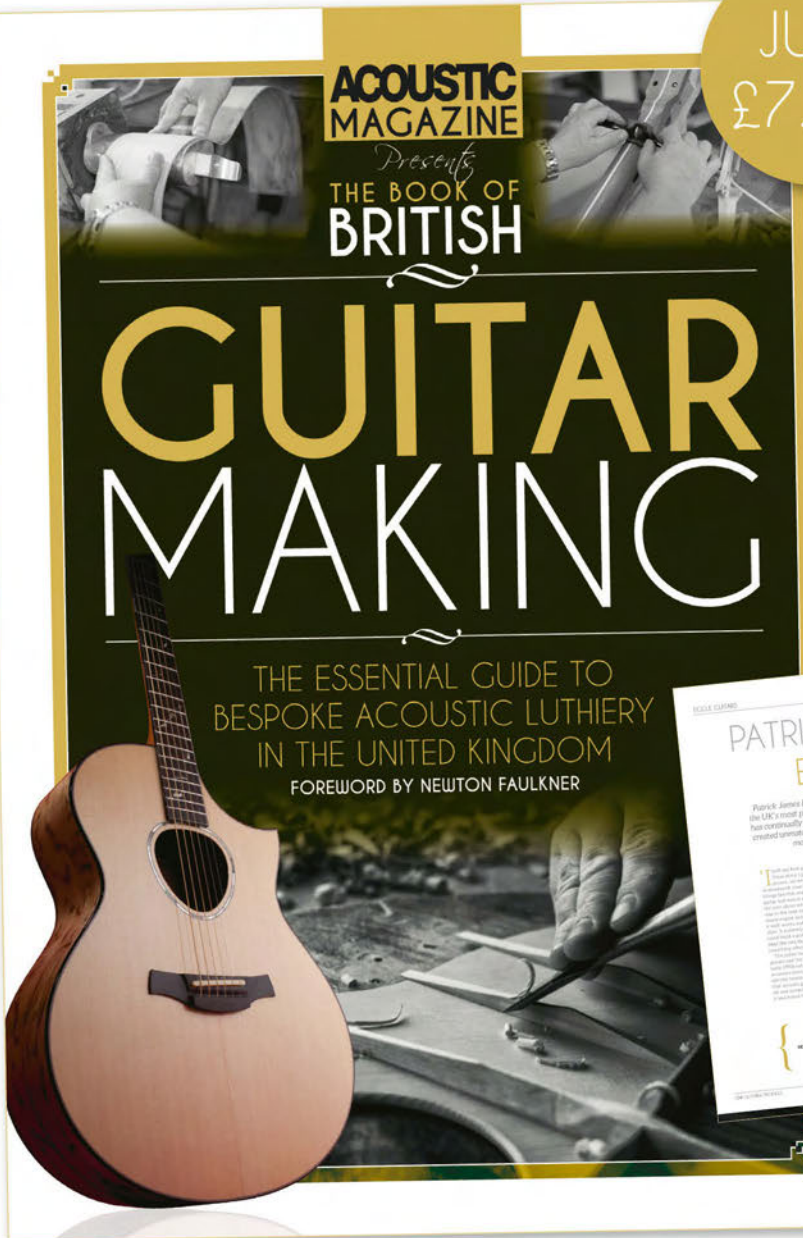
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THE NEXT BIG MO THING EVANS

WORDS: ANDY HUGHES IMAGES: MOEVANS.COM



Mo Evans is a Scottish singer-songwriter who comes from a rich musical dynasty: producer Robin Evans is his father, singer Sam Brown is his mother, and Joe & Vicki Brown are his grandparents. Now, the 19-year old songsmith wants to make a name for himself not only as a descendant of the Brown/Evans family, but as someone who makes his own great music. His EP *Spilled My Love* is out now.

What was it like growing up in a family of musicians?

Growing up, it all seemed normal to me. My mum was pregnant with me when she sang with Pink Floyd on the *Division Bell* tour, and she met my dad in a recording studio; my dad was engineering for my uncle Pete Brown who is a producer and he was working on one of my mum's albums, and eventually they got a studio in Scotland which is called Teapot Studios – my mum collects teapots; they are everywhere. My dad worked with Dodgy, and he found The View, so I was always around studios and musicians. Plus, my grandfather Joe, and my grandma who was a famous session singer, sang on all the T. Rex hits – music and musicians have surrounded me for my entire life.

Do you remember your first musical experience?

Well, my first proper onstage experience was my mum singing 'The Great Gig In The Sky' at Earls Court on the Floyd tour when she was pregnant with me! I remember, as a child, going on the road with my mum and Jools Holland and jumping on stage and playing the mouthpiece to a trombone, and getting a bit carried away one time and getting too close to a microphone, and the sound going all over the venue! I started off in a duo with a guy called Tom Johns who is now my pianist. He is an amazing pianist and writer; we started writing together in secondary school. I played drums for our band called Space Jelly which was us and another guy, and then I started writing songs and decided to follow that line. I was about 13 or 14 and I decided that I was going to take music seriously from then on.

What was your first acoustic guitar?

It was a Martin D-35, from 1971, and I've still got it. My grandfather gave it to me when I was about 12 and I've had a Fishman pickup put in it. I actually started on drums when I was really young. I play my Martin more or less all the time. I have been playing a Gibson J-45, too, which I had to return to Gibson a couple of days ago – and I did like that. The Martin is perfect for writing, because it is so precious to me, it is a very old guitar, and of course my grandfather gave it to me. I think the Gibson feels like a working guitar, I don't mind jumping around on stage with that, but the Martin feels like it needs to be taken care of. It's great for the sound when I am writing, and it's wonderful for recording as well. I have been gigging with the Gibson for about four months, and I do like the feel of control I have with it because it has a smaller body than the Martin. I will have to think about maybe getting a smaller body guitar for live shows.

How did you discover your singing voice? You sing with the same intensity as Jeff Buckley...

Yes, I have heard that comparison quite a few times. Jeff Buckley is my hero. I was doing music GCSE when I first heard *Grace*, and it didn't really click with me then. It made far more of an impression when I heard it again a few years later, when I was writing more of my own songs, and singing, and it just blew me away and I have been a fan ever since. I'm not sure where my voice comes from to be honest. I just know that it has never been a chore to write and play and sing because I

have been around it for so much of my life. I am very lucky to be able to do what I do.

Who else, other than Jeff Buckley, has been an influence?

I love Stevie Wonder; he has always been a big influence. Recently, I have found I really like Ben Howard; his new album is fantastic. It feels odd saying it, but I don't really feel that well educated musically, although I have heard a lot of music coming out of studios when I was growing up. I haven't even listened to all the Beatles' albums yet, but that is simply a matter of having the time. There are loads of musicians whose work I want to check out, but it is simply a matter of having the free time to get to them.

What is your writing process like?

I find that the best songs come easily. I find a melody on the guitar and work on that, and then find some lyrics to go with it. That's my standard process of writing. I find if I try too hard, the ideas drift out of reach, and the results are often not very good. Sometimes it can work, but more often than not it doesn't. You can tell yourself you are going to sit down and write a song, but you will know if it's going to happen or not within the first five minutes. Either you come up with something you can work with, or not, and that's not governed by you deciding to write, it depends on other forces. I find that my hands know where to go on the guitar, or my words flow without me thinking too much about them, and if I haven't got to that within a certain time, I will put the idea on one side and come back to it. I have got hundreds of song ideas, and around 30 completed songs that I am happy with. I keep odd scraps of ideas recorded on my phone, and go back to them. Sometimes, it's years later, and with that distance, I find I like them, and can do something with them.

Tell us a bit about how you're securing your gigs...

I haven't chased a lot of gigs, to be honest. I have been writing for about six months, and I moved to London about four months ago and that has influenced what I am writing about quite a lot. Offers are starting to come in now, which is very satisfying. I have always played a lot of pub gigs, which I love, and still love, but I want to develop as a musician by playing some bigger shows in different places – and bigger venues.

Do you get much music-based advice from your family?

They have always hung back and let me observe and pick up what I wanted to pick up from the life I grew up with. I think my mum did the same thing when she grew up with a very famous dad, and I think the best thing is to just see what works, and what doesn't, and figure things out. I couldn't be happier with the way my parents have approached things. They have always let me find my own way, never tried to push me in any direction, but when there have been things I have needed to know, they have been there to tell me when it's necessary. We have a great relationship.

What would be your dream gig?

If I thought about it, I may change my mind, but I'd absolutely love to do a gig with all my family: my granddad, my uncle and my mum and dad. It may happen one day, you never know. I have three new tracks that I have recorded with my dad, and they will be coming out through my manager's platform which is called Digital White Label. I am really pleased with the progress I have made since my last EP, it's different, but people will still know it's me.

Keep up-to-date with Mo Evans via his website: www.moevans.com

THE WORKSHOP GARY SOUTHWELL

PART TWO OF GORDON GILTRAP'S VISIT TO THE WORKSHOP OF CLASSICAL GUITAR LUTHIER GARY SOUTHWELL WHO BUILDS CUSTOM ORDERS FOR PEOPLE SUCH AS JULIAN BREAM AND PAUL SIMON.

"While I have my own designs, like the A Series, I still make replicas of Hauser and Torres instruments and the odd Panormo and Staufer. I am very happy to accommodate the individual requirements of the customer"



How did you feel when you first took your first Hauser copy guitar to Julian Bream?

When I was around 12 years old, I started off playing folk guitar and as a Christmas present I received a Julian Bream album – that was the first time I'd ever heard classical guitar. That turned me onto the classical scene, and I then started having some classical lessons. Many years later, to have the opportunity to make a guitar for this man was absolutely incredible. He is one of the greatest guitarists of all time, so it was an incredible honour. It was exciting and nerve wracking all at the same time. Of course, I put my heart and soul into the instrument and I took it down to his Wiltshire home. First of all he just looked it over with a beady eye before he even played a note on it. It was five minutes or so, but felt like an age. My heart was pounding. He just sat there looking at it and then he sat down and played it for a long while – still not saying anything, though. It was as though he'd gone into his own world. I was just sat there not knowing whether he was loving it or hating it and not knowing what his reaction would be. I think I was too terrified to actually enjoy the moment myself – hearing him play one of my guitars. After he played it for around 20 minutes, he started to give me a long list of things he thought was wrong with it. They were all small picky things, and as this went on my heart was just sinking. All I can remember is thinking I've blown it! Then he finished by saying, "I think this is the finest first guitar any maker has ever made for me." He wrote

me out a cheque and said, "Go away and make me another one and put all those things right." I didn't know whether to be ecstatic or crestfallen, but that was the start of a great working relationship and I made guitars for him on a regular basis over a 15 years period since that initial meeting.

How many did you make before it got to the point where he couldn't find a fault with a guitar you'd made?

It must have been about three or four instruments before I got to that point, and then he would say, "Maybe we could find a bit more projection". As he often said to me, "All these guitars are great guitars, but I'm looking for something extra special". It wasn't about whether something was right or wrong, it was actually just that extra special thing which is incredibly hard to define. Even as a player yourself, you couldn't say what it was until you'd actually played it.

What did you do to each guitar to improve upon the last one?

Well, one of the wonderful things about Julian is that he has a great intuitive sense of what goes on in the instrument. A lot of players can play an instrument and can give you great feedback on how it's responding, how it feels to play but I think he's the only player that could play an instrument and say something like "You've taken the struts on the bass side a bit thinner this time, haven't you?" He was right every single time. He could just play it and have a sense of what I'd done inside the instrument. He really

was contributing to the construction of the guitar and he had a great sense of that, but you can imagine in the building process you couldn't get away with anything. If anything went a bit awry, you knew there was no point in presenting it to him because he'd know. He loved the sense of adventure and experimentation when we were working together. I was making instruments with him when he was at the end of his career. He'd already retired from recording and he wasn't travelling abroad any more. He was winding down, but was still incredibly enthusiastic and interested in this whole process. All the time there was that faith in me – pushing me to do my best work.

Would he keep each guitar that you made for him?

Sometimes he would keep it for a period and play it in and decide that if he felt it wasn't quite right for him, it would be best to sell it on to someone else. One other thing he did do, which was very admirable, was that he donated some of the instruments to music colleges. They have one in Cardiff and that was an instrument that he played for quite a while but decided to donate it to the college.

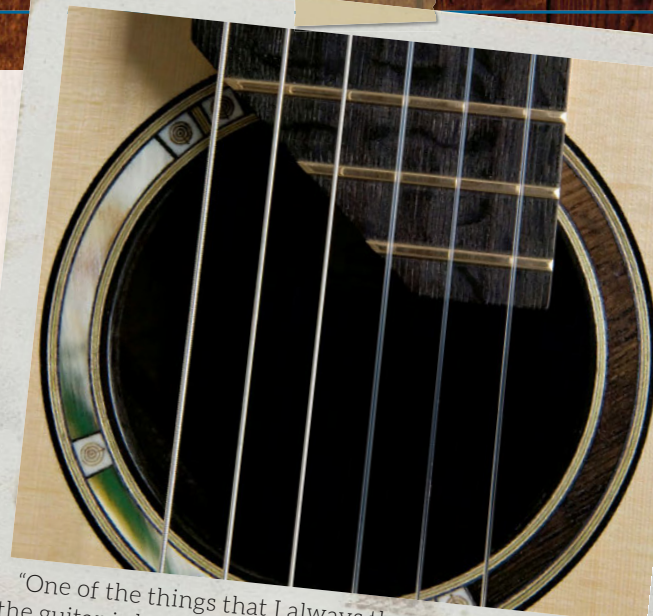
What's your favourite tonewood that you've ever work with?

A recent discovery for me, and one that has been a great inspiration, is bog oak. It's wood that is from ancient oak forests. They have been buried underground in bogs in marshlands on the east coast of the country where all this stuff comes from. It's been buried

underground for nearly 6,000 years. So these trees would be growing in this country at a time before Stonehenge in the Neolithic area. It's a wood I have been aware of for many years. In fact, some years ago, I did use it as a sort of ebony substitute for fingerboards and inlays.

I was looking to get some again to do a similar thing and I came across this furniture maker who had devised a way of extracting this wood from the ground, slowly seasoning it in special kilns he'd made to stop it cracking. The big problem was that as soon as you get them out of the ground, they start drying in the air and splitting and cracking. It's beautifully figured black oak because having been underground for that amount of time, it turns black. Like modern oak, if you cut it on the quarter it has this wonderful figure in it. The other great thing for instrument making is that the density of this bog oak wood – because of the process it has gone through for thousands of years – means it is much denser than modern oak. It has a density very close to rosewood and if you can imagine the internal structure of the wood has been mineralised so, in its nature, it is very different from modern oak. It just looks gorgeous – I saw this stuff and my jaw hit the floor.

I didn't know if it would make a good sounding instrument, but I just knew I had to try so I bought some and made my first classical instrument from it in



"One of the things that I always thought brilliant about the guitar is how much colour and dynamics you can get – that has always been one of the fundamental things I look for in good guitar."



April of 2013. The sound was everything I could have hoped for. It had a big rich open sound and fantastic sustain. I love the sense of history that you have with an instrument made from bog oak, too. I love the fact that it is an English wood. I think throughout my career, I've veered towards a more northern European style of making – the Viennese tradition and the French tradition more than Spanish – and, for me, this has been a wood that has almost sealed that because now I've got this northern European wood which is the back bone of the instruments I am making. I've made three classical guitars from it, and a new departure for me is that I've made my first steel-string in 10 years out of it – they have all gone over to customers in the USA so far.

What do you call this new steel-string model you've built?

They are based on my A Series design that I have been making for a number of years now. The A Series instruments have evolved over many years but it has basically come out of the Viennese tradition of making. Many years ago I fell in love with the Stauffer guitars of the early 19th century. He was a big maker in Vienna. He did some very interesting things like having this moveable neck that is not actually fixed to, or touches, the soundboard. It is both

wonderful from the player's point of view because there is a simple key mechanism where you can quickly adjust the action of the instrument and get it set just how you like but then on the other side you actually have a soundboard which is completely free from interference and I love the quality of sound that it gives the instrument.

With the A Series, I am assuming you are not going to experiment with the strutting, and each guitar is constructed exactly the same?

I think keeping it that way is important for a customer because they will hear someone playing one of those guitars and say, "I love that sound – I want one of those". If they come and get one from me, then that is what they are going to get. Everyone guitar is made by hand and there's always going to be a certain amount of uniqueness to the instrument, but the basic sound, look and feel of the instrument is going to be the same. While I have my own designs, like the A Series, I still make replicas of Hauser and Torres instruments and the odd Panormo and Stauffer. I am very happy to accommodate the individual requirements of the customer.

I've always really the sound I get from German spruce. If I look back through my whole career, I would say that 99 per cent of my instruments have been made from German spruce. As a young maker, I diligently started going over to Germany buying a certain amount of spruce every year so I could build up my stock but then about 10 years ago I'd been working with Bream for quite a while and he said, "I would like to give you something, Gary. Up in the garage there's a load of spruce tops that I bought back at the end of the 1970 when there was all this fear about acid rain destroying all the European forests". Julian had gone over with David Rubio [guitar maker] and bought a huge pile of German

spruce that was just up in his garage and he said, "If it's any good you can have it." So I went up there, not quite knowing what to expect, and there were all these soundboards ready cut. There were about 100 of these things and I've still got them and I have just started making instruments from them. I've got enough spruce now to last me the rest of my guitar making career.

Tell us what you think about the usage of Brazilian rosewood...

Well, we all know it's a CITES endangered species, and that it's incredibly difficult to deal with. There are a lot of countries, like the USA, where even if you have an old instrument made from it, you can't take it into the country, as they will confiscate it. You can get all this paperwork that certifies it, but it is a minefield. It's always been a more expensive instrument if it's been made from Brazilian rosewood. People then think because it's the most expensive it therefore must be the best. I think from a sonic point of view, it's not the best. It's not a very nice wood to work with and another problem with it is it's a very brittle wood. I don't think it makes a great sounding instrument. It's interesting if you want to take Julian Bream as a guide, he didn't like the sound of Brazilian and all the instruments I made for him, plus the Hauser he originally had, were made from Indian rosewood. What Brazilian rosewood does have is that aura about it because it's so expensive; it's become one of those woods people still want.

Do you have a long waiting list?

It's about a year. It varies from time to time. I've tried, particularly in recent



"One of the wonderful things about Julian is that he has a great intuitive sense of what goes on in the instrument. He could play it and know exactly what I'd done to the inside of the instrument."

years, to not take on long waiting lists. We are all getting on a bit, right? A good friend of mine over in America – a maker wanted to retire a few years ago – found he had such a long waiting list he actually couldn't retire. He closed the book but then felt he had to honour his commissions so he still had another five years to work after that. I think if you order an instrument from a hand builder, you will have to accept that there is a certain amount of waiting involved. I work on my own and there are only so many hours in a day. I think if you are in that situation where you wait five years for an instrument, it's very difficult to remain excited about getting it. I think a year or so is fine for me as it gives me a certain amount of security to know what I have to do.

Has there been a point when you have had to turn customers down?

There have been times. I did go through a period, this is going back about 20 years, when orders started building up and I was finding that I had four or five years' waiting time and I then started finding people dropping out because in the meantime they'd found something else or circumstances had changed because they couldn't afford it any more. It often got very messy that way. I never rush

things, because quality then becomes a big issue. I've been making for 35 years now and over that time the demands I put on myself from the point of view of quality continue to go up and up. These days, what I expect of myself in the workshop is ridiculous.

Tell us about how the Paul Simon connection came about.

It was through a friend who repaired and looked after his guitars – his tech, if you like. We go back a long way, and we trained at the London College together but he's since moved over to the States. He called me up and said, "Paul has been looking for a nice new classical guitar and I think he would love one of yours. I've mentioned you to him and he's very interested". He said, "Could you just get one over to me because I'm pretty sure as soon as he sees it he's going to love it". It

was my A Series guitar with a cutaway. It was Indian Rosewood back and sides. So I sent it over and Paul took it away for a play and within 24 hours he said to our mutual friend, "This is great send him some money." I have not seen him play it, but have had reports back that he loves it. Another nice thing that my friend said was that often when they go on tour, they have a rack of instruments and Paul has quite a few guitarists in the band and they all try to get my guitar out of the rack to play it.

Tell us about some other notable players of your instruments...

In the classical

world there are lots of wonderful performers with my guitars including: David Starobin, who has been a great champion of new classical music over in the States; another of the great American players is David Tanenbaum; in Germany there's Frank Bungarten; and also a lot of the great lutenists like Nigel North and Jakob Lindberg.

For me, it's very much about music and the players. I don't really look at, or am aware of, what other people are making. Even though I have studied historical guitars, they have, to some extent, influenced and defined what I do, but that's not really the focus of what I'm trying to create with my sound. It's all lead by the guitarists I've met, and the sort of music they're making. I love having collaborations with players, and so I've been very lucky. Over the years, some of those great players have not just been one off sales; they have become colleagues and friends. We have worked on ideas together, and they have been looking at what they do musically, and I have looked at developing instruments to help them do that. I really see my roll, while creating works of beauty in their own right, as someone who is creating tools for great musicians to make great music.

For more information on Gary and his guitars, visit his website.

www.southwellguitars.co.uk



"Bream didn't like the sound of Brazilian rosewood. All of the instruments I made for him, plus the Hauser he originally had, were made from Indian rosewood. What Brazilian rosewood does have is that aura about it because it's so expensive."



"Giving Bream one of my guitars was exciting and nerve wracking all at the same time – obviously, I put my heart and soul into the instrument."

12 STRING CORNER

Stringing up the 12-string

I get a lot of emails asking what brand of strings I use on my 12-strings. I use La Bella silk and steel. This is partly governed by the age of the instruments; I never tune these to concert pitch, preferring either a tone or a tone and a half down from concert. With all vintage guitars, you have to be wary of exercising too much stress on the guitar and I have always found La Bella silk and steel to work a treat. They also sound great in many different styles. Recently, on my new signature Vintage 12-string, I have started using a different brand: Newtone strings. Due to the style of music I play on 12-strings, split between blues and my own orchestral instrumental style, I tried a set of Newtone Master Class Phosphor Bronze 11-50 for 12-string. For me, these provide a better gauge balance for what I play when I lower the pitch to various tunings in which I play. I'm not saying they are the best strings out there – they're just more suited to what I play on my 12-strings.

The “made in the UK” aspect has huge appeal because there's not a lot of choice in locally produced strings, and I never close the door to trying out new things, especially when they can add to tonal quality.

I'm switching back to the traditional blues genre for this month's 12-string tune. This tune emerged back in the 1920s, and is one of my favourite pieces going under the name of 'Stealin'. It's an evergreen standard on the blues and folk scene that never seems to die. Writing origins are unclear, but Gus Cannon of the Memphis Jug Band did lay claim to the opening line: “Put your arms around me like a circle round the sun” and he and the Jug Band's harmonica player Will Shade are credited as writers on the Memphis Jug Band's recording, but these waters are still muddy despite Peer Music laying claim to the copyright. Its theme deals with a man sleeping around and trying to explain to his regular lady that he really loves her and when he has finished screwing around, he'll always return to her. Without blues and jazz, our music would sound a lot different

STEALIN' PAUL BRETT

these days, so it's always my intention to laud the input of those early African Americans who gave us a vast landscape

with which to grow many of the different genres that we play and enjoy today.

Paul Brett



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What makes a looped guitar part truly memorable? One way is to try and build a great rhythmic hook into your guitar part.

Coming up with an interesting rhythm is often a process of trial and error. You

don't have to use odd timings or uneven bar lengths (unless you want to); you can create an interesting rhythm in 4/4 simply by accenting different beats in each bar and holding some chords for longer than others. Think of your favourite riff and listen to a few of the masters like AC/DC and Led

Zeppelin. Just because these riffs are often played with a full rhythm section and an electric band, doesn't mean you can't apply these same ideas to the acoustic guitar.

Example 1 is our initial riff. I've deliberately based it around some simple first position chords so we can focus on the rhythm. Notice the slight rhythmic differences between the first and second bar; also notice how we hang the D chord in bar three before going for the faster turnaround in bar four. When you hit loop record and play **example 1** into your loop pedal, you may find that the gaps in the riff cause you problems with keeping time. Practice playing the part along to a metronome and tapping along to the beat with your foot; this will help you to really feel the part. You need to internalise the overall pulse. If this is too difficult, try playing the 1-2-3-4 beat on the body of the guitar and recording that in first for four bars and then playing **example 1** over that. If you have your loop pedal connected to a mic, you could record a simple rhythm part using a tambourine or another percussion instrument and then play the example over the top of that. These gaps do take a while to master when looping, but the effect is worth it. Playing along to a metronome and tapping out the beat is a really useful thing to practice to really tighten up your looping.

Notice some notes are more heavily accented than others in **example 1** – playing some chords louder than others

will make your loops more interesting. This kind of attention to dynamic detail takes time to develop but is worth it in the long term.

As the initial loop is rhythmically interesting, you can probably leave it looping for a while, as long as you keep the vocal or melody interesting.

Example 2 is an eighth-note pattern that we can use later in our song; it represents the equivalent of a melodic hi-hat part. When playing a solo guitar and loop pedal song, it's often worth thinking that each additional part represents a different instrument. This'll help when you are arranging the different layers. **Example 2** is a simple riff that gives the loop more flow and begins to cover up those gaps. Hit record on your loop pedal and record **example 2** over the top of **example 1**. At this point, you will find out how in time your initial loop was, as this won't fit unless **example 1** was perfectly in time. Once again, if you find this difficult, return to your metronome and practice the part. When you have internalised the rhythmic feel, it will seem easy.

Once **example 2** is recorded, you can loop this around again and bring back a vocal or melody – it's up to you.

Example 3 is a harmony of **example 2**, which you can add to keep things interesting later on in your song.

Example 4 is a "pedal point" that fits through all the chords. The added notes from this part add some suspended tones to our initial chord sequence and makes things a bit more melodically interesting. The rhythm for this part is pretty driving in contrast to **example 2** and **example 3** which are more straightforward. Add this kind of part later in your song to add an extra hook to your loop. Always ask yourself if a layer will add or take away from the overall composition.

When I was watching the

EXAMPLE 1

Standard tuning

♩ = 90

S-Gt

mf

let ring

let ring

EXAMPLE 2

Standard tuning

♩ = 90

S-Gt

mf

EXAMPLE 3

Standard tuning

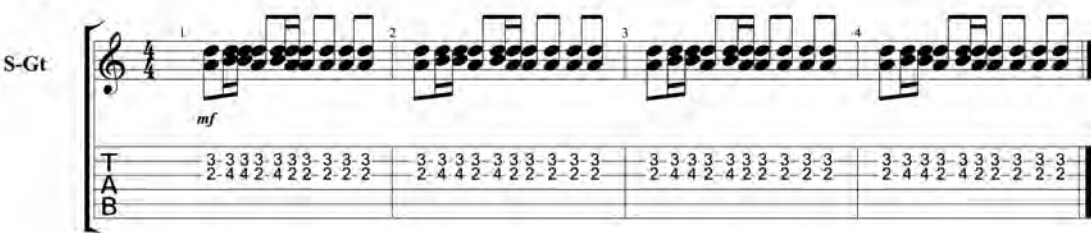
♩ = 90



EXAMPLE 4

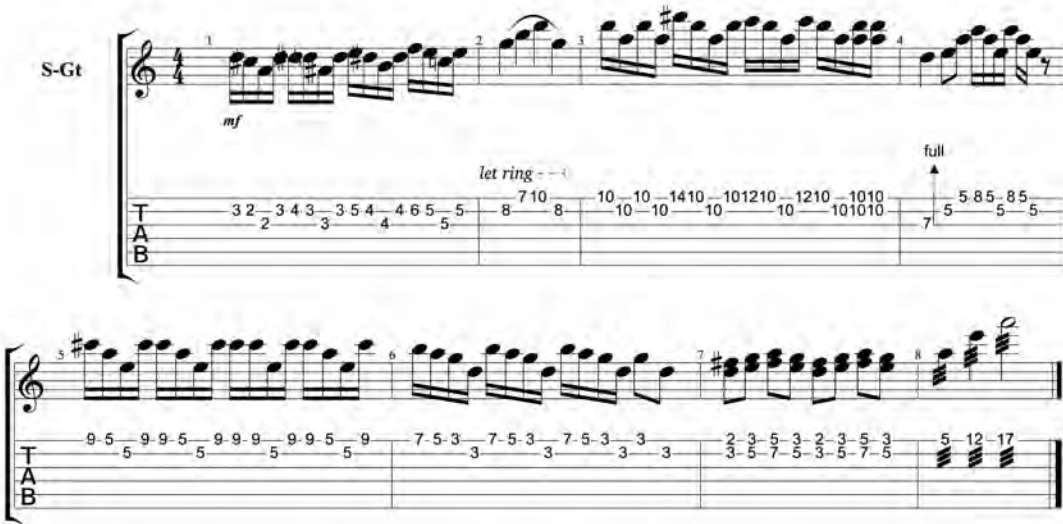
Standard tuning

♩ = 90



EXAMPLE 5

Standard tuning

 $\beta = 90$ 

excellent guitarist Jon Gomm recently, I noticed his use of a distortion pedal on his DI'd electro-acoustic guitar, which gives him a bit more sustain and volume. You have to use a very low gain setting on the distortion pedal or it'll just feedback. This terrifies sound engineers at gigs.

Example 5 features some ideas for a lead part, to be

played with a little bit of fuzz or distortion on your acoustic guitar. This is a very “rock” solo that fits with the more riff-style of this month’s loop.

The first bar features an ascending chromatic riff, followed by a G major triad (G, B, D) in bar two. Bar three is based on a D9 triad (the ninth is added to give a bit of colour to our D chord) and then an A

minor pentatonic-based part in bar four to tie in with those rock changes at the end of our loop. The rest of the solo part is based on a couple more triad arpeggios (A then G) followed by some ascending and descending diads (two-note chords) over our D chord in bar seven. The last part of bar eight features some tremolo picking to give the ending a bit of a lift.



MATT STEVENS
Instrumental Composer

Matt Stevens is a musician and composer from London. An instrumental artist, he uses an acoustic guitar and sampler to create multi-layered tracks live. His music has been described as “a guitar orchestra”. He plays live all over the UK and listens to Sonic Youth, Carcass, Nick Drake, Cardiacs and King Crimson. He is constantly recording new music for several projects.

www.mattstevensguitar.com

These riffs can build and build. If you listen to the way people like Jimmy Page or Radiohead arrange guitar parts, they really build up layers of “orchestral guitar” around a few simple riffs. Page’s “guitar orchestra” on tracks like ‘Achilles Last Stand’ is truly inspirational, as are the layered guitar parts of tracks like ‘How Soon Is Now’ by The Smiths. Robert Fripp’s League Of Crafty Guitarists played multiple guitar parts live, often 10 or more of them on stage at once! Also, try listening to some of the later Beethoven string quartets; there is no reason you can’t apply these ideas to the guitar. The counterpoint style of composers like Bach is also very relevant for looping guitarists. Layering guitar parts with loops is an art. Listen widely and try new things. There are no rules, only what appeals to you. Keep experimenting and if it sounds good to you, use it.

Matt Stevens

10

ALTERNATIVE UKULELE PLAYERS

THAT'LL MELT
YOUR MIND

*Sam Wise counts down
10 alternative ukulele
players to check out and
draw inspiration from...*

Ah, the ukulele – what an enigma it is. Hailed as the great democratiser of music, when you mention the instrument virtually the only names people will mention are George Formby and Tiny Tim. So, now those names, which do not make this list, are out of the way, we can concentrate on 10 varied ukulele players, any of whom may inspire you. I make no apology for the fact that they may not all inspire you however; fans of Amanda Palmer aren't obvious material for Sarah Maisel's fanbase, and that's just fine. Neither will any apology be forthcoming if you haven't heard of some of these people – that's rather the point. Or, to be more precise, the point is that the ukulele is an instrument of more breadth than you might have given it credit for – and to find gems you sometimes have to dig a little.



01 SARAH MAISEL

Sarah Maisel played classical violin from the age of six until she was 17, whereupon she gave up music altogether, only returning when she picked up the ukulele in 2006. Nine years from walking into an ukulele club would not be long enough for most of us to truly master the instrument, but Maisel's wonderful chord-melody jazz playing is as sensitive and nuanced as the very best you will hear on more traditional jazz instruments. As a soloist, she blends these chord-melody versions of jazz standards seamlessly with vocal versions, which her delicate yet soulful voice brings to life in new ways. These days, however, she is more likely to be found in the company of fiancée Craig Chee, playing duo music that subverts all the patriarchal stereotypes of the music industry, as Chee often tends towards the lead vocal role, while Maisel will sit on the harmonies, and take care of the ukulele pyrotechnics. So committed is Maisel to this partnership that on their joint site all of her solo records have been allowed to sell out, but catching her on YouTube or at live show is highly recommended while you wait for Kickstarter to fund their joint project. If she doesn't make you want to finally find a way to play that jazz standard you've always liked the look of, I'll be astonished.

Listen to: 'How High The Moon' (on YouTube), *Have Uke Will Travel* (if you can find a copy)
www.cheemaisel.com



02 AMANDA PALMER

If you don't know Amanda F***ing Palmer (that's her legal middle name) yet then you're in for a treat. She started out as a living statue street performer before rising to prominence in the early 2000s as half of art-punk uberduo The Dresden Dolls. Going solo in 2007, Palmer recently came to the attention of the tabloid reading public when a wardrobe malfunction led to a nipple being briefly exposed during her Glastonbury performance. Palmer's response to this was to lambast their focus on her body instead of her music with a brand new song titled 'Dear Daily Mail' at the Camden Roundhouse a few days later, delivering the second half of the song completely naked. If that's not punk rock, I don't know what is. Far from a virtuoso, Palmer started using the uke as a gag on stage, but has become a convert, producing an entire ukulele album, *Amanda Palmer Performs the Popular Hits of Radiohead on Her Magical Ukulele*. Perhaps her most singular contribution to the ukulele canon, however, is the song 'Ukulele Anthem', wherein she celebrates the act of making music for its own sake, contrasts it with some of the horrific things people do when they don't have a good outlet for their feelings, and ponders whether Sid Vicious would have lived a long and happy life if he had played ukulele. Oh, and also, Neil Gaiman is married to her.

Listen to: *Amanda Palmer Performs the Popular Hits of Radiohead on Her Magical Ukulele*, *Theatre Is Evil*
www.amandapalmer.net



03 JAKE SHIMABUKURO

Did any one individual start the ukulele boom of the 2000s? Nothing is ever that simple, but Jake Shimabukuro's performance of 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' in Central Park, which went viral and gained millions of views on YouTube, was as seminal an individual moment as you can find. Shimabukuro was already well known in his native Hawaii, where ukulele didn't need a renaissance to get heard, but since that Central Park moment, he has become a figurehead for the ukulele's status as a serious musical instrument. Shimabukuro has become best known for his complex solo arrangements of pop classics, with his covers of Queen, Daft Punk and Adele dividing opinion as far as their advisability, but leaving no space for argument regarding his phenomenal playing talent. A master of strumming, Jake is able to bring the melody out while weaving complex harmonic pictures around it.

Listen to: 'Gently Weeps', *Peace Love Ukulele*

www.jakeshimabukuro.com



04 JOHN KING

John King was plucked from us by a heart attack at the age of 55, before the world could benefit from his uniqueness. A guitar teacher at Eckerd College, in St Petersburg, Florida, King picked up the ukulele when he learned that it was tuned similarly to one of the guitar's ancestors. King then set about arranging a variety of classical repertoire for ukulele. King, often described as the "ukulele's only classical virtuoso", played in a style called "campanella", which translates as "little bells", crossing strings as often as possible to allow the previous note to ring on. King bequeathed the world albums of both Western classical and Royal Hawaiian music, two magnificent books which can help the learner unlock the ukulele as a classical instrument. If you have always thought of the ukulele as a novelty instrument strummed by those who don't want to play real music, log on to YouTube and listen to him play the Prelude from Bach's cello concerto. You will come away thinking it's a ukulele concerto.

Listen to: *John King Plays Bach, Royal Hawaiian Music*



05 GERALD ROSS

Gerald Ross is an enigma; since the 1960s, he has made his living from music one way and another, playing guitar in bands mostly, and picking up fluency in a range of styles on the way. In the late 90s, an interest in the lap steel guitar led him to the ukulele, and today most of his output is on these two instruments. His *Ukulele Swing* album and video series have won him many admirers. What propels him into this list was his personal inspirational influence over me; watching him talk and play on ukulele video series *Bosko and Honey's Ukulele Safari* had me exploring new styles, and his willingness to share his knowledge on ukulele forums made a convert of me when I was on the fence about the instrument. Ross's rhythmic subtlety make his *Ukulele Swing* videos a joy, but delve a little deeper, and you're just as likely to find him performing lap steel wonders at Western Swing events. A journeyman and a master in the same stroke, Gerald epitomises what makes the ukulele scene so interesting.

Listen to: *Ukulele Hit Parade*
www.geraldross.com



06 JULIA NUNES

Making ukulele videos in her college dorm room was a bit of fun for Nunes until her cover of Destiny's Child's 'Survivor' won the high profile Bushman Ukulele Contest in 2007. Nunes' stylings proved irresistible and her winning video went viral. She has since supported Ben Folds on a number of occasions and released four albums. For her most recent album, *Settle Down*, she sought \$15,000 on Kickstarter, but was eventually funded to a total of \$77,888, the third highest ever raised for a music project on the site. She has proved that in the internet age, a ukulele, hard work and a DIY ethic can make a career.

Listen to: *Settle Down, I Wrote These*. www.junumusic.com



07 JAMES HILL

A theme is emerging here: very few of our inspiring ukulele players exist solely to play ukulele. To make it as a ukulele player you need to have strings to your bow and be able to graft a little. Wandering Kiwi James Hill is not only a handy percussive uke player, he's also a natural entertainer and a music teacher. You might find him at a ukulele festival, or at your local folk club, confusing the locals with covers of 'Kashmir' or 'Billie Jean' featuring tapping and slapping. None of this eclecticism means that Hill doesn't make fabulous music in his own right though; pick up his new album *The Old Silo*, and you'll find an excellent songwriter in full flight, and more than that, you won't hear an ukulele album, just an album that happens to feature uke. Hill bends the little instrument to his will, with blazing crunchy country-rock riffs and gritty electric slide ukulele.

Listen to: *The Old Silo*, "True Love Don't Weep" (with cellist Anne Davison)
www.jameshillmusic.com



08 ROY SMECK

It may surprise our readers to learn that this is far from the first ukulele boom. In the 1920s, the little instrument had a flowering of popularity, harmed in no way by the golden age of cinema making entertainment national and even worldwide. Born in 1900 in Pennsylvania, Smeck cut his teeth on the vaudeville circuit, developing dazzling skill on guitar, banjo, lap steel and ukulele. Smeck was no singer, as evidenced in the documentary *Wizard Of The Strings* on YouTube, so to make himself more appealing as a performer, he innovated all sorts of tricks and stunts which have inspired thousands since. Smeck was playing ukulele behind his head and with his teeth before Hendrix was born. Like many of his era, you won't hear much fingerstyle from Roy, but if you want to see the legendary split-stroke, Roy Smeck is the man for you. You can even pick up his ukulele instruction manual.

Listen to: *Wizard Of The Strings*, *Memories With Melodies*



09 ZAHRA LOWZLEY

Trained initially as a classical pianist, Zahra eventually gave that up due to the narrow mindedness of her tutors. Picking up a cheap classical guitar with no sense of how to play it, she laid it on her lap and tapped rather than plucking or strumming, and that same sense of adventure and boundless possibility infuses her ukulele playing. Zahra has no record label and no CDs, yet ukulele players across the internet cite her as an inspiration. Watching her videos on YouTube, it's not hard to see why she employs a repertoire of techniques that most fingerstyle guitar maestros would struggle to match. Her persona manages to be as punk rock as her playing sounds neo-classical, which goes to show you that punk rock is an attitude more than a musical style.

Listen to: 'Post Mortem Of A Monster' (available on Bandcamp)

www.youtube.com/user/RobynLowzley



10 BOB BROZMAN

Brozman was not a man to feel limited to one instrument or style. He played guitar, lap steel, tenor guitar, ukulele, and as his career went on, he played blues, calypso, gypsy jazz, and too many other styles to mention. He travelled the world and made records with little known masters of little known styles. If you find him on ukulele, expect extraordinary ragtime fingerstyle, blazing speed and dexterity. Bob's tone was quite different to anyone else on this list; aggressive, bright and in your face. Tragically, Bob committed suicide in 2013, but it would be a fitting tribute if his music continued to inspire players around the world.

Listen to: *Ukulele Toolbox* (DVD), anything you find on Youtube. www.bobbrozman.com

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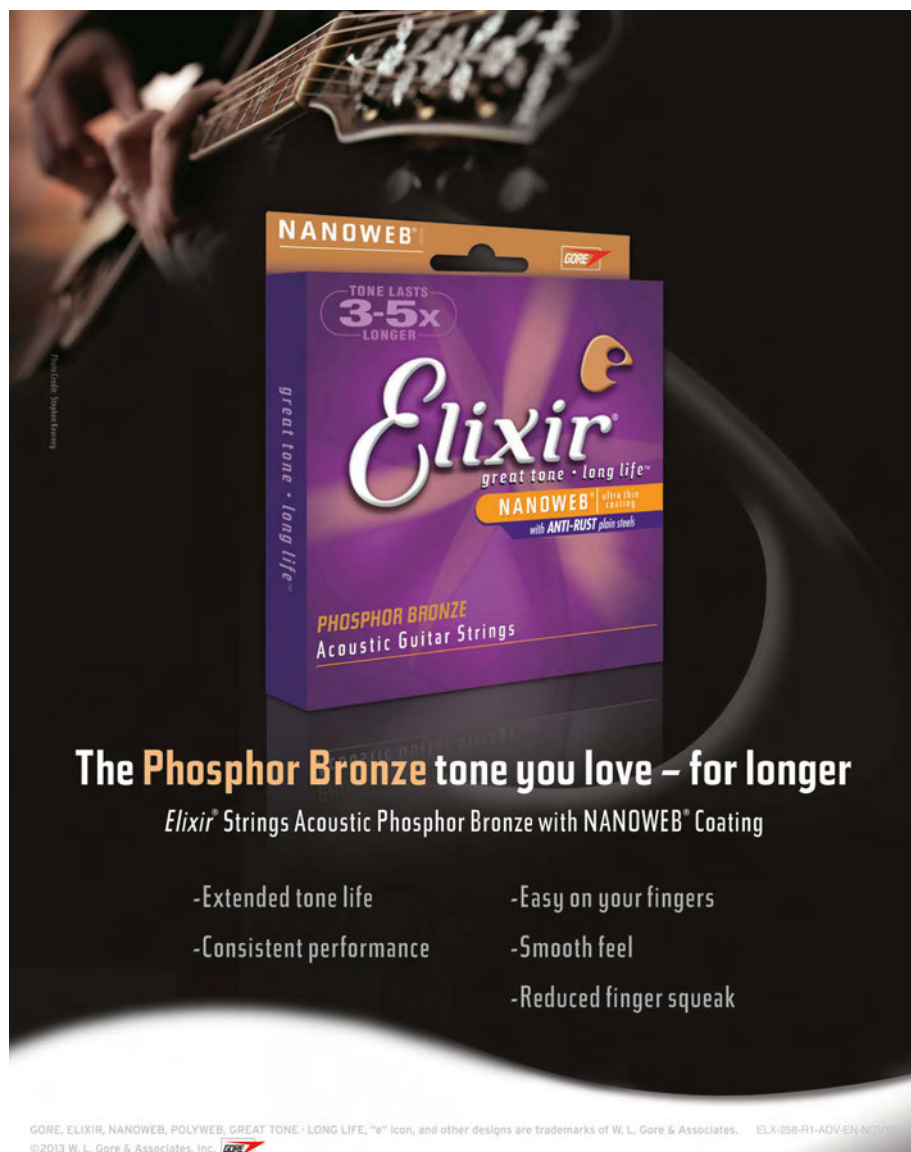
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106
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'MARCH'

TAKEN FROM 'MARCH & THE MESSENGER'



CLIVE CARROLL

Acoustic Virtuoso

Essex boy Carroll was born into a family of musicians and 35 years on he finally got a job writing for *Acoustic* magazine. In between, he spent a lot of time waiting around in airports, filing his nails and befriending theatre sound technicians.

www.clivecarroll.co.uk

I hope you enjoyed the previous two columns about harmonics and that you continue to explore shapes of your own. In contrast to that, I would like to offer a march piece, which may help your internal rhythm of the picking hand. I usually attach this piece to a fast reel called 'The Messenger' and it appears on my album, *The Red Guitar*.

The opening chord of D5 is played entirely with the thumb. In this instance, the most important note within the chord is top A, so as you strum, accentuate string one. After this, in general, the lower stems in the staff notation are played with the thumb while the upper melodic ones are plucked with the index, middle and ring fingers.

At beat two, the thumb plucks string four and the

⑥ = D

⑥ = D PO H PO PO PO PO H H

5 SL PO H PO PO PO a m i m

9 12. H H PO PO H PO

12 PO PO H H H PO

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2

15

PO H PO PO H

18

H PO PO H PO PO PO H

22

PO

24

H H a m i m

upper D is played with the middle finger. The thumb then plays both bass notes at beat three before returning to the fourth string on beat four. It may be useful practising the

alternating bass pattern before adding the upper melody.

In bar four beat two, the thumb plays the fourth string D only while index, middle and ring pluck the rest of

the chord on the top three strings. Above the solid bass line, the melody should also be played in strict time. Another great exercise is to single out the melody and play it to a

metronome click ensuring that every note is even regardless of it being a pluck, pull-off or hammer-on. It is also very important to stress that all grace notes should sound on the beat and are resolved as fast as possible to the following melody note.

A contrasting technique appears in bar eight where strumming is required across the top three strings. The fingering is marked and strumming with the back of each digit creates the sound. I usually start each strum about half way up the nail.

At the end of bar nine, a half barre is placed at the fifth fret and then moves to fret 10 half way through bar 10. Although this phrase is a little more labour intensive, it must still be played in time. On occasion, I pluck and slide up to the tenth fret but the phrase remains in strict time by sounding the lower bass D exactly on beat three.

In bar 22, there are a series of block chords and the rhythm is syncopated. All notes within each chord should sound together with the index, middle and ring taking the upper three strings and thumb is on bass. The final three notes have been bracketed because they act as upbeats incase you want to repeat the whole piece.

It is fundamentally important to play any dance tune in time. I would recommend the use of a metronome (I do it myself) and once you have the music under your fingers, start around crotchet-80 and slowly work up to about crotchet-160.

Clive Carroll

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LEON HUNT

UK Banjo Expert

Leon Hunt continues to confound the stereotypes that try to confine the banjo to bluegrass, by making his living playing alongside some of the world's top musicians from a number of musical styles and disciplines. That said, he's not one to shy away from the clichés either – watch the TV for a long enough and there's every chance you'll hear some of his music. Leon has also enjoyed being part of several major theatre productions and as well as being a frequent contributor to *Acoustic*, Leon also recently completed his debut instructional package for Mel Bay, which is out now. www.leonhunt.com



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Back in issue 93, I talked about the various tunings there are for the five-string banjo, almost 130 if my still slightly incredulous memory serves me correctly. I said it back then and I'll say it again: blissful ignorance of at least 120 of these is probably advisable. For my own playing, I've pretty much distilled this down to just

three; 98 per cent of the time I stay well within the confines of standard G tuning and for the remaining 2 per cent I opt either for double C tuning or D tuning.

The focus for the aforementioned article was the hauntingly beautiful traditional Appalachian tune 'Chilly Winds', played out of double C tuning (g C G C D). Having promised to return to the subject of "alt" tunings at some point to look at the other big hitter – 'D tuning' (f# D F# A D) – I felt the time was right, especially as one of my students had recently requested that we work on the often overlooked but nonetheless fabulous Ralph Stanley instrumental 'Hard Times'.

This is essentially a three-chord tune in three sections, although the three chords in question aren't quite the usual suspects. The first and the third parts share the same simple sequence, so simple in fact I could have easily substituted the word "sequence" with the word "chord" as, unless you want to get all fancy, you can stay at D for the entire duration of these parts. The middle section adds some welcome harmonic colour by shifting to, and going back and forth from, the relative minor (Bm) to F#.

One of the things that really appealed to me when

I first heard this tune was the abundant use of string bending, especially in the third section. Bending or "choking" strings on a banjo can, at least to begin with, be something of a challenge to get a respectable sound from, but is definitely well worth the investment of time. If done badly, it can sound horrible. I once heard some poorly executed string bending being described as "sounding like a dog caught on barbed wire". That said, if you avoid the technique altogether, you'd be depriving your playing of one of the most characteristic sounds a bluegrass banjo can make.

Here's the issue: banjo notes are short and transient. This means that, unlike when bending strings on an instrument with more sustain such as a guitar or better still an electric guitar, you generally only get one direction per picked note, up or down. You'll also have to be quick and precise to get the full effect of the bend otherwise the note will expire mid-way, leaving the listener with nothing more than a whimpering note that has just been apologetically bent out of shape ringing in his or her ears. For all these reasons bends on a banjo, especially in bluegrass related

music, usually feels more like fast tweaks than the drawn out Clapton-esque, face-gurning sound one generally associates with string bending.

Another tricky feature of all this string bending is when you have adjacent bends going in the same direction. If you take a look at the third section of 'Hard Times' you'll notice there's a fair amount of this. The challenge is always to bend the string and then silently and speedily return the string to its unbent state in order to repeat the process. For this, you'll need to subtly release the pressure on the string, just enough to get it away from the fret but not so much that you lose control of the string altogether. In reality this is all little more than just a knack, but a good understanding of what you're actually trying to achieve, and what needs to happen throughout the process, will be useful.

As I write, I realise I've yet to mention Ralph Stanley in the pages of this magazine. Along with his older brother Carter, Ralph was one of the most significant of the "first generation" bluegrass musicians. The Stanley Brothers led their band The Clinch Mountain Boys together from 1946 until Carter's death in 1966, at which

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HARD TIMES - KEY OF D

A Part

6

10

14

B Part

18

22

26

30

point Ralph was forced to go solo. Ralph did later revive The Clinch Mountain Boys. The band still performs live today, although Ralph now just fronts

them and sings lead, handing the banjo duties over to Mitchell Van Dyke. If you've ever seen the Coen Brothers' film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?*, that

was Ralph Stanley singing that cheery little number 'Oh Death'.

Stanley's approach to the banjo could best be described as a slightly simplified version of

Scruggs' style, drawing more on his native mountain music and less on the New Orleans jazz that Earl was busy integrating. Technically, Stanley's playing relies on lots of strong forward rolls and a crisp tone resulting from a very hard, close to the bridge, picking style.

Leon Hunt

PLAYING CHORDS IN D TUNING

It's all very well tuning your banjo differently and learning some new tunes with it, but as soon as you find yourself in need of some chord knowledge for accompaniment or to extend the music or to improvise, you'll in all likelihood be utterly lost. Having found myself in exactly this situation many years ago while attempting to work out of D tuning, I was shown this nice trick: play your chords exactly as you would in G tuning but in your head transpose them to D. For example, every G chord you play, think of it as a D; C becomes G, D becomes A and so on. At this point, the first thing you'll notice is that it all sounds horrible, but wait... If you move everything across one string, leaving the first string open and whatever finger was on the fourth string redundant, it all now works perfectly. For the most part, that open first string will be fine but when it isn't take your redundant finger and put it parallel with the finger that is now on the fourth string, or even move it somewhere else altogether to create an extension of some kind.

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DANIEL HO

Grammy Award-winning musician

Daniel Ho is a multiple Grammy Award winner and record producer specialising in Hawaiian music. In 2010, Daniel's solo ukulele album *Polani* became the first of its kind to receive a Grammy nomination. He has numerous Hawaiian music industry accolades, has authored eight tuition books and tours the world as an acclaimed songwriter, performer and university lecturer. Daniel was born in Honolulu, but is now based in Los Angeles.

www.danielho.com

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NA PANA 'ELUA

THE TWO HEARTBEATS

Inspiration can come from within, but it can also come from all around – experiences, places and people. Awareness and an openness to learn will keep compositions, playing, and even practicing aglow with fascination. In all my years as a composer and musician, 'Na Pana 'Elua' (The Two Heartbeats) is the most challenging and rewarding piece I've ever attempted. I am excited to share with you some insights that have filled my year – with musical revelations and newfound skills.

This piece is based on a magnificent Indian

polyrhythm. The first rhythm is made up of 10-and-a-half beats phrased in four beats, two beats, three beats, and one-and-a-half beats ($4 + 2 + 3 + 1.5 = 10.5$). See **example 1**.

The other, also an odd meter, is phrased in seven dotted quarter notes. See **example 2**.

These pulses intertwine when two cycles of 10-and-a-half meet three cycles of seven. If we break this polyrhythm down to its lowest common denominator, the eighth note, we'll notice that 10-and-a-half quarter notes is equal to 21 eighth notes. Seven dotted quarter notes is also equivalent to 21 eighth notes. Therefore, both rhythms come together at the beginning of each phrase. See **example 3**.

I spent many months practising this rhythm. The beauty of it was that I could work on it anywhere and at any time. I remember standing at a train station in Japan waiting for the Shinkansen, tapping 10-and-a-half on my guitar case and seven with my foot. Another distinct memory I have was shadowing my wife around a clothing store that was blasting electronic dance music. I never found the incessant, computer-triggered, quarter note kick sample very interesting.

To entertain myself, I tried to count 10-and-a-half beats over the 4/4 meter of the song. Suddenly, I was listening intently to the thumping kick drum because the beat turned upside-down at the end of each 10.5 bar. I don't think I was able to do it consistently, but it sure made the music (and shopping) fun!

After months of working on every permutation I could think of, I got to a point where I could clap a Partido Alto samba rhythm in 10-and-a-half while walking in seven. I was amazed that something as basic as a rhythmic concept could turn idle minutes of my life into valuable educational opportunities. Even without my ukulele, I never found myself bored.

Now it was time to write. I started by composing a melody to the 10-and-a-half rhythm. Technically, the time signature of 'Na Pana 'Elua' (The Two Heartbeats) is 21/8 (21 eighth notes per measure), but to make it a little easier to read and comprehend, I divided 21/8 into a bar of 12/8 and a bar of 9/8. See **example 4**.

Then I came up with an ostinato in seven that outlined the harmony and supported the melody with flowing movement. See **example 5**.

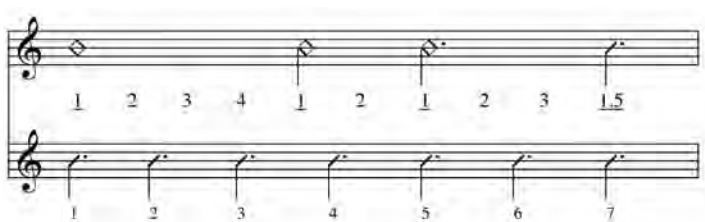
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



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EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5

$\text{♩} = 172$

mf

C(add9) Cma7/E Fsus(add9) F(add9)

5 Cma7/E C7/D Ami/D F/C E7/B B^b7(13) 3

9 Ami(11) Gsus Fma9(+11) F⁶ C9/E C+7/E Dmi9

13 C/G G B^b(add9)

the melody in 10-and-a-half and the accompaniment in seven on the four strings of my ukulele. This monumental effort was akin to assembling a 2,000-piece puzzle of a clear blue sky. To play this fingerstyle arrangement, you'll need a low G string and utilise three or four fingers on your right hand. See **example 6**.

Like a movie with clever dialog and an intriguing plot, music can have layers of interest that aren't always apparent the first time through. A composition

to discover subtleties with multiple listens. To augment the composition's musical dimensions and depth, I composed a bass ukulele part in the 10-and-a-half rhythm, and a second ukulele part playing harmonics in seven. The bass ukulele fills out the low frequencies, and the ukulele harmonics sound above the main ukulele melody. Each instrument has its own tessitura, which preserves clarity and helps the arrangement sound full. See **example 7**.

While I was composing

title, I was never quite sure how the adventurous components would coalesce. As a conceptual starting point, I used traditional world music rhythms and instruments to establish a subliminal familiarity. The ipu heke, a Hawaiian percussion instrument made from a gourd, provides the rock heartbeat in 10-and-a-half, while the ukulele and bass ukulele define the melody and harmony. The African udu, or ibo drum, has a rhythmic conversation with the ipu heke, over

which the shaker, triangle, caxixi and agogo bells dance to the Partido Alto rhythm. The convergence of Indian, African, Latin American, and Hawaiian rhythms and instruments proved effective, as everything came together like a musical dénouement in the final mix.

My composition teacher in high school once told me, "Don't write anything unless you can explain it." The process behind what went into this piece is musically theoretical in provenance, but is personally fulfilling thanks to a world of influences. I carry in my heart the people, places, and experiences that widen my vistas with the inspiration to explore creative horizons.

'Na Pana Elua' (The Two Heartbeats) is the opening track of Daniel Ho's new CD **Aukahi (Flowing Harmony)**, available on iTunes and at www.DanielHo.com



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THOMAS LEEB

Fingerstyle Virtuoso

Austrian-born Thomas Leeb plays a style he calls "the bastard child of acoustic fingerstyle." This style owes as much to percussive techniques as traditional fingerstyle guitar as his tunes are usually punctuated by slaps, pops and beats. Adding to the overall effect is his frequent use of ringing harmonics. 'What Thomas does on an acoustic guitar probably shouldn't be legal.'

www.thomasleeb.com

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

'BLUE BEAR'

THOMAS LEEB MEETS DON ROSS

'BLUE BEAR' (FIRST CHORUS) - DON ROSS

Standard tuning

♩ = 120

S-Gt

TAB

TAB

TAB

Don's been an inspiration of mine since I learned his tune 'The First Ride' while busking in Dublin in 1996. It's safe to say that he is one of the leading lights of acoustic guitar; not only has he inspired a generation of players, most notably Andy McKee, with his infectious grooves and melodies, but he also continues to tour and perform all over the world. Don has both a thorough understanding of composition and rock-solid groove – and, to top it all off, he's a really great guy.

This song came out of repeated, semi-random phone calls by a promoter who kept trying to get to

Don to appear at various Robert Johnson tribute concerts over the years. Don kept turning down the

invitations – he just doesn't do the blues thing – but the spark for this tune came out of that story.

In Don's words: 'This is an interesting tune for me because it's something I've only ever done once: a 12-bar

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blues in standard tuning...
It's even in E! The first figure is intentionally cliché and meant to be a bit of a soundalike to 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' by Joe Zawinul, while using the bass line from Steely Dan's 'Rikki Don't Lose That Number'. Other than that, lots of walking bass/passing notes, altered chords, and an example of the dreaded "tritone substitution" halfway through bar 11. Overall, a thorough experience of rich jazz/blues harmony and chromaticism.'

We're looking at the first chorus only in this column - I'd suggest a thumbpick to really get the Ross signature sound. Make sure to really double-check your left-hand fingerings with the video, Don is an incredibly efficient

player and this will save you a lot of fumbling from one chord to the next. Getting Don's signature strum/click combination may take a while

(I had a hard time getting my fingers to obey) but should be well worth the effort. P.S. this is pretty damn hard!

Thomas Leeb

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DAVID MEAD

Tuition Author

David Mead is one of the UK's foremost guitar writers, having authored several best-selling tutors. An accomplished acoustic guitarist, he has released two critically-acclaimed albums, *Nocturnal* and *Arboretum*.

www.davidmead.net

This month I'm continuing my quest to make some of the more basic elements of music composition and harmony as simple as possible to understand. We've considered some of the devices available to you before: using thirds and sixths to harmonise a melody, repetitive bass grooves and so on, but now we're going to look at how we can make even the most simple melody sound complete by learning a little about adding bass notes.

If you were to take a sample of 100 pieces of folk or Celtic music, you'd be quite likely to find that many of them have fewer chords in them than you might think. A piece of music can sound quite complex when it has undergone an arrangement or a little orchestration, but stripped down to their

underpants most tunes are incredibly simple in construction. In fact, many of them contain no more than three chords.

In order to understand this,

you'll have to bear with me a little as I condense a few hundred years of musical evolution into just a few sentences. First of all, we know that melodies are drawn

from scales and that the harmony we place on top or underneath draws from the same basic builder's yard. In other words, if you are playing a song in the key of D major,

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

DISCOVERING DADGAD

THREE-POINT TURNS

EXAMPLE 1

Ex 1

Guitar

Guitar

T
A
B

0 2 4 0 | 0 2 4 0

EXAMPLE 2

Gtr.

Gtr.

0 2 4 0 | 0 2 4 0

EXAMPLE 3

Gtr.

Gtr.

0 2 4 0 | 0 2 4 0

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you're likely to find that all the harmony, melody, basslines and chord tones share the one resource: the D major scale. Over the years, it's become commonplace for songs to centre around three specific points of the scale: the first, fourth and fifth notes. So if we study a song in D, we're probably going to see the chords D, G and A7 cropping up all the way through. These three points in the scale are a bit like music's very own three point turn. The D chord represents "home", the G chord is "away" and the A7 is the signpost back to the start. But, sometimes, we don't even need to go as far as playing chords underneath a melody, often just some carefully placed bass notes are all you need to underpin a tune and make it sound full and complete.

To illustrate this I've written out the D major scale using the notes D, G and A as bass notes. Take a look at **examples 1-3**.

If you play through **example 1**, you'll hear how each scale tone sounds pretty much ok against the D bass. Some are a better fit than others, but basically everything sounds acceptable. Next, if you play through **example 2**, you'll get to hear what the scale sounds like supported by the note G. Once again, it doesn't sound at all bad in that there are none of those really grating dissonances that sometimes occur when one note is played randomly against another. Now play through **example 3**; this time, everything sounds OK, but you're left feeling that it's a work in progress at the end. It doesn't really seem to

EXAMPLE 4

Three Point Turn

finish satisfactorily. This is because A is the signpost back to D and not strong enough to finish the job by itself; in other words, we need to hear a D at the end to sign everything off.

So the results are that the D scale sounds right over D, perhaps a little distracted over the G and a bit lost over the A. But if we put them together so that they fall at the correct places under a simple melody, everything suddenly becomes coherent and satisfying.

To ram this point home even further, I've written a

very easy to play melody and harmonised it by inserting the correct bass notes in all the right places. If you play the melody by itself to begin with, you'll get an idea of what exactly is going on. Then play it again with the bass part in place and you should find that it sounds far better. This is because it's been correctly "punctuated" by the three notes of the D scale that are there to give the ear some idea of structure. Just like a sentence from a novel reads well when the punctuation

is there to help with the phrasing and overall flow, the bass notes give the melody a shape that the ear can detect.

So play through 'Three Point Turn' (**example 4**) a few times and then try to embellish the melody with a few ideas of your own. I've left a lot of space in order to make this possible. After a little while spent experimenting, I'm sure that you'll begin to hear how easy it is to produce similar results in your own compositions!

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CHRIS WOODS

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Touring instrumental guitarist, recording as 'Chris Woods Groove', described as 'changing the perceived boundaries of the acoustic guitar'. Author of the acclaimed book and DVD package *Percussive Acoustic Guitar* from Hall Leonard.

www.chriswoods groove.co.uk

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

PALM MUTING

EXPLORING DIFFERENT TONAL TEXTURES

There are an almost infinite number of ways to play a note on the guitar, and that's what makes our instrument of choice so awesome. You can let a note ring for different lengths, play it with a different velocity, you can bend it, you can hammer-on, you can slide (you get the idea!), and within each of those techniques, there are million different variables. One technique that can be used to give you even more choice and contrast is palm muting, and this month I have created

an exercise to help you hone your palm muting skills!

I've created a simple warm up to get you started. As always, head to the digital edition to have the video to hand as it will help no end – especially if you're starting out in the world of palm muting.

This technique does what it says on the tin: palm muting is muting with your palm of your right hand. For the warm up, simply focus first on resting the palm over the strings and playing the E string, experiment with how

far towards the bridge you are; the closer to the bridge the more the note rings out, and the further away the less it rings out.

In the main exercise, I've created a relatively simple arpeggio pattern, holding a chord but changing the bass notes. On the first cycle you should aim to mute the lower bass strings, and on the second time round you should lower your palm so you can mute the treble strings. This isn't an exact science – it's about trial and error. Experiment until you create the desired affect. Finally, we have a hammered lick which is palm muted for the first few notes, but once you get to the D string, move your palm away so the note can ring out.

This technique is all about giving you more contrasts to play with. The most stunning guitar work is nearly always rich in textures, and mixing varying degrees of palm muting is a great way to achieve this. The important thing to grasp here is that palm muting isn't an "on" or "off" scenario, just like any note on the guitar there are so many variables at play. Moving your palm a millimeter to the left or right can create some serious tonal differences – so really spend time appreciating the subtlety of this great technique. Enjoy.

Chris Woods



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PALM MUTING WARM UP

Standard tuning

$\text{♩} = 120$

Gt

mf
P.M.

T
A
B

0 0 0 0

PALM MUTING

$\text{♩} = 120$

Gt

mf
P.M.

P.M.

T
A
B

0 4 0 4 0 4

2 4 0 4 4 0 4

P.M.

P.M.

T
A
B

0 4 0 4 0 4

0 4 0 4 4 0 4

P.M.

P.M.

T
A
B

0 4 0 4 0 4

3 4 0 4 4 0 4

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LEGENDS

Gordon Lightfoot

WORDS: TERI SACCONI

Singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot has recorded more than 200 songs, and artists such as Elvis Presley, Barbra Streisand, Johnny Cash, and Bob Dylan have covered his music. He has been active on the music scene for decades and his instantly recognisable catalogue is still played on radio across the world today, making him a bona fide legend. Lightfoot's music comprises personal, political and environmental issues. What's more, his nuanced vocal style dovetails perfectly with his acoustic guitar playing.

Born in Ontario, Canada, in 1938, Lightfoot grew up in a musical family and got his first taste of performing while in the church choir. He studied voice and piano, won talent awards, and he also taught himself to play guitar before joining a folk group; Lightfoot performed at the hallowed Massey Hall in Toronto aged only 13. Before he was 20, he relocated to Los Angeles to study orchestration and jazz composition, and while there he found work singing on jingles. Homesick for Canada, Gordon returned to Toronto to focus his efforts on folk and country music. In 1960, he became a member of the Swinging Eight, a vocal group, before forming a duo: The Two Tones. After catching him live in a club, Canadian folk duo Ian and Sylvia added some of his compositions to their own set. Additionally, their manager Albert Grossman (notorious manager for Dylan, Joplin) signed him to a management contract. In 1966, Lightfoot signed a record deal with his first solo album *Lightfoot!* released the same year. Folk trio Peter, Paul and Mary covered 'Early Morning Rain' and 'For Lovin' Me.' Between 1967 and 1969,



Lightfoot record three more studio albums and a live LP, becoming a massive star in Canada while in the United States his songs were best known as covers by other artists.

1970 proved to be a turning point as Gordon split with his manager and record label, moving to the Reprise label to release the internationally successful 'If You Could Read My Mind' (both the album and single). Finally, achieving success in the giant American market with this release, Lightfoot stubbornly remained a stalwart Canuck, basing himself permanently in his homeland, and writing songs that were paeans to Canada, exemplified on 1971's *Summer Side Of Life* featuring songs about his roots and nature.

Although Lightfoot was diagnosed with Bell's palsy in 1972, the illness only sidelined him for a short time. In 1974, he returned with a successful album *Sundown*, which included the title tune and 'Carefree

Highway' – both of which became major hit singles. In fact, Lightfoot's commercial apex came with this album.

His next two albums would also feature pop hits – *Cold On The Shoulder* (1975) included the hit 'Rainy Day People' and *Summertime Dream* (1976) included the quirky monster hit 'The Wreck Of The Edmund Fitzgerald'. By this time, Gordon had become a household name.

The 80s were a decidedly slow decade for Lightfoot as his hits dried up after his success in the 70s. Nevertheless, he continued to tour throughout the period. Lightfoot began experiencing a creative revival in the 90s, recording two of his best-reviewed albums in

decades: 1993's *Waiting For You* and 1998's *A Painter Passing Through*. In 2012, he released a collection of recordings from his many appearances at Massey Hall; it was only his second live album in a career lasting over 40 years.

In September of 2002, Lightfoot suffered an abdominal haemorrhage. He was in a coma for six weeks but it didn't stop him for long as he was back in action the following year. In 2006, he suffered a stroke, but again Lightfoot got back on his feet and still tours to this day.

'Renewing the relationship with the fans is everything to me,' he said in 2012. 'I do 60 shows a year which people seem to be shocked by. But it's not a lot for me. In fact, it rejuvenates me to be out on the road. It's all about doing the work in the end.'

One thing's for certain: Lightfoot's relaxed musical ambience and inviting guitar playing still draws in fans as the simple beauty of his music is timeless. ■



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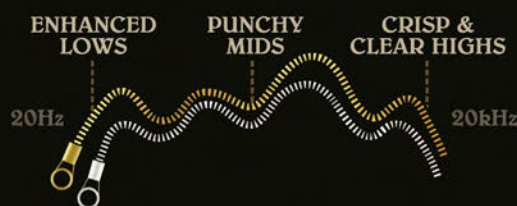


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